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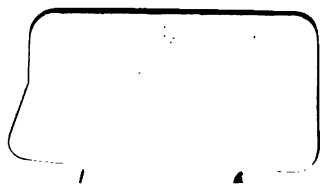
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BY  
MARK EVANS.

PART II.  
*STORIES OF THE JOURNEY.*

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY M. C. McDOUGALL,  
AND A MAP.

LONDON:  
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CENTRAL PALESTINE.

# THE KING'S STORY BOOK.



## PART II.

### *STORIES OF THE JOURNEY.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE JOURNEY.

THE home of Jesus at Capernaum lay distant from the capital of Judea one hundred miles and more, but the Teacher of Galilee made many a visit to Jerusalem.

It was only natural that He should do so, for, as a Jew, He always paid respect to the rules laid down by the law of Moses, and shared the solemn acts of worship in the temple, which were considered the duty and the privilege of every member of the Jewish nation.

"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" were the words with which He met His dear mother's look of wonder when she found Him, a mere boy, in the temple; and so it

may well be that as He passed through youth into manhood, He was often found with a company of those that kept holyday, on the road to the sacred city of His fathers.

There was no great difficulty about the journey, for the Romans took care that in their provinces there should be good roads, not for the pleasure of the inhabitants, but in order that the soldiery might march easily from one end of the land to the other, and keep the population in subjection.

We hear of Jesus northward of Galilee, in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and once indeed in Phœnicia, to the westward, or, as we should say, on the seaside. But most of His journeys were backward and forward to Jerusalem; for He had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and could have no rest till He had preached the news, the good news of the kingdom, throughout the cities of His fatherland.

On His way south, Jesus would leave the dear old home of Nazareth nestling on the hill-side to the right, and passing almost beneath the shadow of Mount Tabor, would cross the loveliest plain in Palestine, the plain of Esdraelon. When He went up to the feast of Passover in springtime, this valley would be a green sea of waving corn, with here and there a patch of shadow woven by the weird silvery boughs of the olives, which rustled in the sunshine and the breeze. Here in the plain

Jesus is still in His own loved Galilee, and Mount Tabor is loth to lose sight of Him. But presently He has passed below the little town of Nain, and is close on one of the great fortresses of the Romans which stood guardian in the south-eastern corner of His province, Bethshan, or, as the Romans named it, Scythopolis.

From this point, if it pleased him, a traveller to the south might cross one of the fords or bridges of the Jordan into the land of Gilead, the country which in old time had been divided between the two tribes of Reuben and Gad. There, rising in successive heights from the plain of the Jordan, were mountain ranges three thousand feet high, through some pass in which came Abraham, the father of the faithful, in search of the land which was afterwards to be to him for an inheritance. Among these mountains was trained Jephthah, the brave saviour of his people; and from these wild highlands came the Bedouin prophet, Elijah, with his stern and fearless denunciations against Ahab and the idolatry which he had suffered Jezebel to set up in Samaria. Here, on this eastern side of the river, wandered the great king of Israel in the days of his exile; and in the woods upon the same hill-sides, where the oak and the terebinth stood as monarchs, ministered to by a matchless court for beauty—oleanders and plane-trees, almonds and olives,—the false but favourite son of David met his fate.

Long years after, the same deep shade of these highland woods, which had been for a while the home of David, were to furnish a place of retreat to Him whom they called the Son of David. Among the solitudes beyond the Jordan it was that the Christ, after receiving from His Father the anointing from heaven, struggled against the temptations of self-pleasing and self-seeking ; and here, when jaded by the merciless sneers of the religious people of Jerusalem, He would withdraw for the comfort of His Father's presence.

This land of Gilead, or Perea, or "the land beyond the Jordan" as it is called in the Gospels, is an unknown land now, with no occupants save bands of wandering and untrustworthy Arabs. But if you could work your way through the thick underwood, which has made the forests well-nigh impassable, you would meet with signs of great cities. Ruins of temples, colonnades, theatres, and porticoes, lie here and there hidden or half-hidden amid some of the richest and loveliest scenery that the eye could wish for ; and in many of the miserable towns existing, you might find walls built out of the huge stones which formerly belonged to a Roman palace, or you might trace the name of a Roman emperor on the doorway in some Mussulman village.

But when Jesus passed by that way, the temples towered their white marble arches against the blue

skies and amid glorious groves of palms, the colonnades which Greek art had built for its Roman conqueror, looked as if they would hold their own for ever. This district beyond the Jordan the Romans called *Decapolis*, because of its ten great cities. The very names of these cities have almost perished; but the Prophet from Nazareth who passed through their streets, remains the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The river Jordan was useless to a traveller southward through Palestine, for its waters were so winding that he might float down them for two or three days and still find himself but a few miles from the southern end of the lake of Genesareth, so that there was really but one of two roads to choose—the one on the east side, the other on the west of the river.

Once, indeed, our Lord took the way westward, for after He had left the fortress town of Scythopolis, and maybe visited once again the place of His baptism, we find Him, wearied with His journey, resting beside Jacob's well in the central district of Palestine, the province of Samaria.

You well remember what happened there, I am sure:—the woman coming from the neighbouring town to draw water, and astonished at His asking her to let Him drink from her pitcher. She, the daughter of a proud and unforgiving race, accus-



tomed to think that God could be worshipped only on the mountain hard by the spot where they were talking ; and He, although one of the tribes which held that they and they only had kept themselves the true people of God, was yet now setting forth to her in parable, the great future of the kingdom which He had come to open up to all men ; a kingdom which should need no temple of marble or of gold, no king save One, crowned with a thorn wreath on Mount Calvary.

It was a lovely valley this, where the dear Lord was resting Himself that day ; unlike anything in the whole of His journey. For the amount of moisture in the air seems to give a softness to the view and a mistiness of outline which is not seen in the more open country, where the blazing gold of the sunshine gives place to the clear deep blue of starlight. And not only was this spot a beautiful one, but it was sacred in the eyes of Jewish people ; for even when enmity had separated the northern and the southern kingdoms, no Jew could forget Mount Gerizim, where Abraham had offered up his will to the Most High, who had called him thither from his native land ; nor yet could they fail to stand in awe of that other mountain just over against Gerizim, which shared with it the guardianship of the way—Mount Ebal, from which a solemn curse had been pronounced, in the hearing of the tribes, on all who forsook the Lord God of their fathers. Had Jesus

not been weary that day, He might have climbed the six hundred feet to the top of Gerizim, and caught one more sight of the beloved mountain-top of Hermon ; of the great sea, shimmering in the west ; and, through a ravine where the Jabbok comes tumbling over the rapids into the Jordan, might have had a glimpse of the desert land where He fought His great battle with the tempter.

But from Sychar, where we have thus thought of Jesus sitting and opening up the truth to the wondering woman of Samaria, there are forty miles and more to the capital, so He must start again and toil on. Passing Beth-el, we may be sure that to Him, as to His great ancestor Jacob, the heavens would be opened, and angels would bring the strength so sorely needed as He drew near to the city, where He was to be rejected and to suffer and to die.

But for a while, at any rate, sympathy and unchanging love have a welcome ready for Him at Bethany, and He can make an end of His journey there, with those who are always on the outlook for His coming.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

OF all the fruit which was grown in Palestine, the vine was the most common and abundant. It flourished on the heights of Lebanon and Hermon, it terraced the hill-sides of central Palestine, but reached its perfection further south, where the size and beauty of its fruit excited the surprise and wonder of the Hebrew people, when they came up from the desert to begin the conquest of the Holy Land.

The vine was cultivated abundantly on the hill-sides and in terraces, just as it is nowadays in the south of France ; and if any of you have seen it there, you will understand how much labour and care is needed to secure success. The earth is heaped together all round the mountain slopes, and then a wall of stones is piled up to the height of four or five feet, so as to keep the earth in its place and prevent its being washed away by the rains.

Constant attention is needed, for if the stone walls gave way at any point, the water would soon

den the breach and send stones and earth down to the valley. So closely indeed do these embankments need watching, that in Palestine, although work in the fields was forbidden by the Jewish law during the Sabbatic year, as it was called—that is, each seventh year—it was allowable to watch over these walled terraces and repair any damage done to them.

The vine was a great source of wealth to the Jews. For the rent of one vineyard, Solomon received a thousand pieces of silver, and his wife's dowry for which even more was paid. So the loss of these terraces of vineyards would be a terrible one for the people, and you can understand that when one of the prophets (Micah) wished to describe the destruction that was sure to come upon Samaria, because God had been forsaken and every wickedness was being practised in the land, he said, Samaria shall become as a heap in the fields, for the planting of vineyards and all the stones of her terraces shall be poured down into the valley."

Micah and the rest of the prophets knew what they were saying. They watched the growing sin of their countrymen. On these very mountains of Samaria, idols were openly worshipped, and the God and Father of His people, who had done such great things for them, was publicly mocked at and insulted; and from these very hill-sides the grapes were taken and pressed for wine, that men might

rise up early in the morning and follow strong drink and continue till the evening till the wine inflamed them, while instruments of music were in their dissolute feasts; but the works of God were forgotten, and His love and goodness put out of sight.

Is it any wonder if the men who remained faithful to God spoke strongly to their countrymen? While these latter were giving themselves wholly to pleasure and self-indulgence, turning their backs upon their fathers' God, learning from each idolatrous nation round them fresh forms of evil, and making their very acts of worship the scenes of gross wickedness, is it strange if to them, thus making themselves lower than the beasts, the prophets told of the certain outcome of their infamy, and that through their own disunions and quarrels they were positively inviting attack from the military empires in the north?

I ask you these questions because I want you to understand that the Jews, like every other nation, and like every one of us who forsakes God, doing wrong wilfully and by choice, were punishing *themselves*. In the Bible, when men or nations sin, God is often spoken of as being made angry and punishing them. Always bear in mind that the books of the Bible were written by Asiatics, and that their way of speaking was, and is, very different from ours. We must get this much into our

minds about the language of the Bible, that when it speaks, for instance, of God being provoked to jealousy, or made angry, or punishing, or repenting of His intention to punish, these are Oriental forms of saying, either that men have forsaken God and have been doing the wrong, or that they have gone back into the right path, and, to the best of their power, have undone the wrong of which they were guilty.

Each time that we try to be good, we become more like the good—that is, like God Himself; and our trying to become so, can spring only from His spirit in our hearts;—that leaven, that good seed which He has placed there. Each time we refuse to do the good, or determine to do wrong, we take a step away from God, and as God, being the good, must be also the holy, the pure, the bright and the happy, we are, you see, taking a step away from all this, *into the darkness*.

And in that darkness we shall stumble and hurt ourselves, depend on it, if we do not cry out that little prayer to our Father, “Turn Thou us unto Thee.” Try and walk across one room in the dark, and see if you do not hurt yourself against something. But do not, I beg of you, make the experiment of doing what is sinful, to see what comes of it. For, believe me, as certain as the sun is in the heavens, trouble will come of it—must come, sooner or later; for even if neither you nor any one

else see at the time what has followed your sin, you have none the less taken a step away from the Father who so dearly loves you, from the blessed Saviour whose arms are open to embrace you. You have let your lower nature lead you toward the darkness, and you have become a little more like one of the beasts that perish.

But to come back to the vineyard on the hill-side of Israel.

Such a vineyard might be let out for so much money, as we have seen in Solomon's case, or the owner himself might cultivate it by workmen to whom he paid daily wages, the rate, in our Lord's time, being eightpence a day. It is about such a man that a story is now told us.

He went out one morning, about nine o'clock, to hire men for the day's work, and having fixed their regular pay, he sent them into the vineyard. Then, at twelve, he saw some others standing idle in the market, and these also were set to work, with the promise that they should be fairly paid. During his afternoon walk, at three, he found some other men doing nothing; to these, as to the others, he at once gave employment. And once more, at five, happening to be out, he saw men idling, who told him that they were idle because no man had hired them. Well, it was a long summer's day, and there were some hours yet in which work might be done, so he bid these labourers go at once into the vineyard.

At evening, the overseer is called to pay the men, and the labourers who were engaged at five receive the regular wages, in a coin called a denarius. And so on with the others, till the men who had been hired at nine in the morning, and had toiled all the day, begin to grumble that they have but got the same pay as their companions who had only worked since five.

But what says the master? "Friend, I do thee no wrong. A bargain is a bargain. You have had fair pay, and you know it and agreed for it. Surely I may judge of my own affairs; surely if I desire to give to this last even as to thee, it is lawful for me to do what I will with mine own."

Jesus leaves you in no doubt as to what He means this story to teach us. It is this, He says—"Many first will be last, and last first."

Now, if you look at your Bible, you will find some words added to this Parable; thus, "For many be called, but few chosen:" and these words have been a great difficulty to persons trying to make out the meaning of the story of the labourers; and no wonder, for I think that even you will be able to see they have nothing at all to do with it. In the story, *all* were called and *all* were chosen, so it is clear that these words cannot be in their right place, for we never find Christ making His parables unintelligible, or indeed anything but so simple that His little children may understand them.



I dare say you know, that we owe our Bibles to the hard toil of a few good men who made it the work of their lives, one at one time, one at another, to copy out—and most beautifully they did it—one or more of the books of the Bible. There was no printing in the days of which I speak, and if it had not been that these monks took a life's trouble for us, we might have been without these beautiful stories of Christ and all account of His loving life.

Our New Testament, as it now stands, was printed in the time of James I., partly from an edition which had been prepared by Erasmus, in 1516, from some writings to which he got access, but none of which were older than the tenth century. That is to say, they were copies which had been made from still older books, but not till a thousand years after the death of Christ.

Since the time of King James, scholars have had better means of tracing out the oldest copies—manuscripts, as they are called—of the New Testament, and a body of English and American scholars are now busy comparing these with our New Testament, and very soon, I hope, we shall have from them the nearest approach to the exact words of the first copies of our Holy Books, which at present it is possible to get.

Now, in the two oldest manuscripts that have been discovered, these words in the sixteenth verse of the twentieth chapter of St. Matthew, about

which we are talking, *do not appear*, and the story ends where I believe Christ ended it, with His lesson, "So the last will be first, and the first last."

It is not easy to avoid mistakes, and if it had not been for the reverent love which those old monks and others had for the words of Jesus and the apostles, we should have had a great many more differences than there are, in copies of the New Testament.

It was laborious work, to copy out the Holy Books. In dimly lighted cells, on cold floors, some men would spend a life-time, and thank God if they were able to add one Gospel or one letter of an apostle to the library of their monastery. Very likely the book from which they worked had been borrowed, and all possible care was taken of it. As for his own copy, how the man threw into it all his heart and soul! Watch him tracing out the form of every letter, almost to perfection, and when the letters are traced, he colours them with such nicety that you would not know but they were printed. Birds, flowers, and curious figures ornament the beginning of fresh paragraphs or chapters; gold is put on with a lavish hand and careless of cost, for can anything be of too great worth to spend upon the words of Christ! And when the man comes to the holy name of God or Christ, see him sinking on his knees and praying that in the last great day, when the harvest is being

gathered in by the heavenly reapers, he, too, may find his name written in the Book of Life, and be among those who follow their Lord to the kingdom prepared for them.

Yes, in the days when these things happened, a copy of a Gospel was one of the greatest and rarest gifts that could be made to any one. Now it can be bought for a penny. Are we any the better for it, do you think?

When you see all these great Bibles in the shop windows, and when you look at your own, remember the men whose loving life's work it was, to write down for you all the stories of the Christ. They are with Him and the saints now, for He has said to them, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

But it will not surprise you to find that, take all the care they would, errors of letters and words must needs creep into one copy and another; and this story of *The Labourers in the Vineyard*, as it is now given in our Bibles, shows us how easily these mistakes may have been made. For if you will turn over a page or two to the twenty-second chapter of St. Matthew, you will find another story, to be talked over by-and-by, which ends, and very naturally so, with the very words, "For many are called, but few are chosen," and there is little or no doubt, I think, that in the copy of the New Testament from which our present

version is taken, these words got in where they are now in the twentieth chapter, because the copyist missed his place and wrote from the wrong page.

Supposing it be so, the story of these labourers becomes a very simple one, like all Christ's stories, and its meaning is plain.

But to understand it, we must go back to the circumstances which happened before the story was told ; we must see, in short, *why* Jesus told it.

It was a question of St. Peter's to which we owe it, as you will remember was the case with the story of The Unmerciful Servant.

As they were in the way, one had come running to Jesus, and kneeling down, asked Him, "Teacher, what must I do to have everlasting life?" and the good Lord, finding that the man was doing the right as far as he knew it, tried of what strength his determination was, by bidding him go sell all that he had, and follow the Teacher of Galilee !

And then, with his usual eagerness, Peter presses forward, saying, "Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee ; what shall we have therefore ?"

Mark the answer. "Every one that has left brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, or houses, for My name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit everlasting life. *But many first will be last, and the last first.*"

Then follows the story, the lesson of which I

think will be clear to you. For *all* who laboured in Christ's vineyard, there was the sure reward—everlasting life ; but what St. Peter needed to be taught, and what we need to learn from the story, is this,—that there will be *an order* in which the reward is given, and that this order will surprise some of those who, like St. Peter, are tempted to boast for the moment, that they have left *all*, and are therefore entitled to something more than their neighbours.

It may seem that their work for Christ has been longer and harder than the work of others, and are they not to be better paid ?

It is a common temptation this—to fancy we have done something for God, in the world or in the kingdom of His Christ. My children, *God does not need our work*. We speak of honouring God, of giving glory to God, but all such language is talking in parables. For a friend, for our country, for our queen, we can work in such a way as to glorify them, and to bring increased honour upon them. And so, using everyday language, we talk of glorifying God.

If a great monarch held all the riches of the world in his treasury, and you added to the sum, half a farthing, could you say he was the richer ?

You throw, from the cliff, one pebble more on the beach or shingle that stretches for miles, glittering as the rising tide runs up and drenches it ; have

you made any addition worth calling an addition to the mass of stones upon that seashore ?

Yet, herein is a marvellous thing. That stone which you throw, does really make a difference on the beach. So small a thing as a stone thrown, may be the beginning of a new continent. And more wonderful still, our Father in Heaven does accept these little acts of ours which are done for love of Him. Though they seem of no more value, perhaps, than throwing a stone upon the sands, He does let them grow into great results. It is because we have His Divine nature in us that it is so ; because His Spirit gives us power to be godlike ; because as brothers and sisters of His Son, we can, if we will, overcome all temptations to self-indulgence. We can, if we be so minded, choose the work to which He calls us, no matter how great or how small it may be, rather than the joys of home or the riches of the world ; and for doing so, He tells us we shall become the inheritors—that is, have a positive right to—that everlasting life, which is His own free gift.

Whether we shall be among the first or the last, when the reward is given, God knoweth. That will depend, not so much on the *amount* of work done, as on *the reason for* which we have worked. There may be six of you, eight, ten, or twenty of you, in the first class at your school ; but, for *all that*, you stand in a certain order : and I dare say you have found, many a time, that it is not the one who was expected to be first, that turns out to be so.

But be comforted. The word of the blessed One speaks to you now, as it spoke to St. Peter, "Ye who have followed Me will inherit everlasting life."

Let this, then, be your life's work, this your own aim above all things, to follow Him, and do not trouble yourself to ask St. Peter's question, "What shall we have?" for trust Him who loves you, that "whatever is right that shall ye receive." The time you have to work, the way in which you have to work, is for the Master to settle—it does not lie with you.

However young you may be, you can work for Jesus, because to follow Him is to work for Him. But still, perhaps, you fancy you can do nothing; you are too young, too poor, too weak. Here are the words of Christ Himself that it is not so. To work for Him, is not to do some great thing which is seen of men; to work for Him, is not to go about saying, "Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" To give up something for the love of Him, that is the greatest and noblest work. Greatest, because it may be done in secret without a living soul knowing of it, save your Father who seeth in secret; noblest, because done, as it will be, just because you love Jesus best of all, it must make you more like Him who is more than noble, who is King.

It is possible there may be great work for you

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some day in the kingdom of God, which cannot fail to be seen of men ; which may cause your name to be repeated from one mouth to another, and it may be said of you, "Lo, he or she has left all, and followed Christ." If ever it should be so, may the dear God of His mercy shield you from the temptation that will come to you to say, "What shall I have therefore ?" I say, may God keep you safe from that temptation ; but if it ever threaten to overcome you, let the lesson of The Labourers in the Vineyard ring a warning in your ear, "Many first will be last, and last first."



## CHAPTER III.

### THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT.

YOU do not like to be disturbed in the night. Nobody does. Suppose that when you had been cosily asleep for three hours, some one came knocking loudly at your door, asking you to run downstairs and get him a book of yours from the cupboard in which it was kept. You would be very cross no doubt, and tell him to go away ; that you were in bed, and could not be troubled to get books out of a cupboard ; and then, calling him very thoughtless, you would turn round again to snooze.

But if instead of saying he was sorry and then going away, the person who had disturbed you were to keep on knocking and give you no rest, I suppose that at last, in order to get rid of him, you would get up, bad-tempered enough, rouse yourself, and find this book for which you were being worried.

Just such a case happened in this story which the King is now telling us.

A man came to his friend's house at midnight and called to him, "Friend, give me three loaves, for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him." But the owner of the house answered, "Trouble me not; the door has been shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give it you." But this man would not take no for an answer, and continued knocking and calling. And then says Christ of the man who had been disturbed, "I say unto you, that though he will not get up and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, or his worrying, he will rise and give him as many loaves as he needs."

To trouble a neighbour in this way was a very rude thing; the man who could do it showed no sort of respect or consideration for his friend, and it was not merely his importunity, as our New Testament puts it—that is, his constant asking—but it was what the Greek word carries as its full meaning, his *shamelessness*, that led the householder to get up at last and satisfy him. There was no chance of his going away till he got what he had come for; he did not think about his friend's comfort or convenience, his determination was to get what he wanted.

Now remember, please, what I have explained before, about our dear Lord telling His parables just when the occasion for them arose. He caught

sight of a sower in the fields, or of the net being dragged on shore, and here was an opportunity for a little story to His friends and the crowd. Sometimes a question was asked, and He answered with a Parable, because it was most likely to be remembered and to make people think.

This story is in answer to a question.

Jesus had been praying, and when He ceased, His disciples begged Him to teach them to pray, as the prophet John had taught his followers.

Then their dear Master and Lord gave them first of all, that short form of prayer which to this hour goes by His name, and which rises all day and night from some quarter of the world or another to the throne of our Father in heaven. We have it, with slight alterations in the words, from one source and another, but the meaning is one and the same.

In those words of the blessed One, you talk with "Our Father in heaven," and you do so for the reason that He is our Father and not our enemy ; He is what we mean by Father, but, as I showed you, a million times more than all that we can mean.

And you beg that His name, that loving, mighty name of Father, may be "hallowed," that is, may be loved and feared as holy, as the name above every name ; that it may never be used lightly, carelessly, or in sport ; that it may never be insulted by men using it as a cover for what is false,

mean, or base, while the persons using it, pretend to be doing what they do "in the name" of God.

Believe me, there can be nothing more awful, more terrible, than doing that—committing positive wickedness and all the time fooling men or blinding them into a belief, that you are doing it in God's name. You only need to recollect how the gentle One Himself dealt with such persons in His day; He almost swept them away with His bitter words; children of the evil one, he called them, serpents, vipers.

Are there any of us whom He would call so, if He were to be once more seen among us? The dear God knows; but the very thought is enough to put us all on our guard, lest we should fail to "hallow" our Father's name. God's promise to us is, that He will be a Father unto us *if we come out and be separate* from them that insult Him, and that we *touch not* the unclean thing—that is, if we keep ourselves away altogether from what is opposed to His purity, holiness, and love.

There, then, you see the way in which we have to "hallow" the name of our Father in heaven. It is not by a hushed voice or a slower tone in speaking the name of God, though all these outward signs of reverence may be helps to us; but it is by living the life of His Christ, by being separate from sin, that we may hallow our Father's name, that, children as you are, little workers together with

Christ as you must be, you may glorify His name, make it more glorious in the eyes of angels and men.

“Thy kingdom come!”—ah, if we are trying to hallow God’s name, in the way Christ meant, these next words of His, will come very naturally to our lips. Look once more at those pictures of the kingdom of heaven which Jesus has given you, and then say, can you help asking that the seed may grow silently but surely, till it is seen of all men and fills the earth with its branches ; till all that is evil is overcome ; till the prayer has gone up, “Turn Thou us unto Thee ;” till the fields become white for the heavenly reapers, and the garden of your own heart has become filled with the fair flowers of a Christlike life.

Can you forget to ask for the coming of God’s kingdom, when it was to hasten it, that the Boy of Nazareth sorrowed through His lifetime even unto death ? Can you cease to implore that this kingdom may come, so that your Saviour may see the full reward of all His work, and His joy may be perfected for ever, as He finishes the great sacrifice of Himself by giving up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

Meanwhile, you have to hallow God’s name, and to help on the coming of His kingdom with your bodies as well as your spirits, which are His ; and so, naturally enough, you pray that these bodies

may have the daily bread needful for them if they are to be strong and in health, temperate and under control, if they are to be of real use to you as servants in doing the work of God.

Notice that you ask for bread, not for goodies ; for what is necessary, not what is nice ; but whatever your Father may send that is nice, take thankfully, and love Him the more. He sends it : do not on any account, therefore, despise it, but never forget that it is given you to make good use of ; to share with others ; or, if His Spirit so prompt you, to offer back to Him as one of your pearls. Don't suppose that your picture-books, your toys, and your sweatmeats are such trifles that you cannot make presents of them to Him who loves you ; if you had been able to nestle up to the dear Christ when He was here, I am sure that you would have kept the best of all for Him.

In His love, He suffers you to do it now.

He says that when you give anything, *because you love Him*, to the least of His brethren and sisters under the arches, in hospitals, in crowded courts, on beds of sickness, you are giving it *to Him*.

How often we forget this ! How far short we come of hallowing God's name by living the life of Jesus ! How little we try to help on the coming of His kingdom by rooting out the weeds from the garden of our heart, and letting our light shine

before men, to the end that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven! And so, in its most fitting place, follows the prayer—

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive every one that is indebted to us.”

Think over the story of The Unmerciful Servant, and all that it means, before you say this prayer, that so, by God's help, you may pray it from your heart. “If ye forgive, ye shall be forgiven,” is a promise of Him who cannot deceive you; and from the parable of The Unmerciful Servant, you will have understood how terribly true it is, that unless you do forgive others, you put it (by your own doing, not your Father's) beyond your reach to be forgiven. But I cannot believe for one moment that you could act thus, when you have thought of what goes before, the words which have been last on your lips. You are talking with your own dear Father in heaven, who has given you all, even His blessed Christ; who is waiting to forgive you, yes, actually longing to set you free from the debt you owe, and it must be that you have made up your mind to forgive up to seventy times seven. Let it be so, and then, even before you ask, you will be forgiven, set free from all the debt you owe, and the only debt left you, will be one of greater love to Him who has so freely forgiven.

There will, however, be always temptations for you to think more of yourself than of your King,

more of your own pleasure than of His kingdom ; the animal nature will plan for its own happiness ; so that each day you live, and just as regularly as you want your daily bread, you need to ask—

“Lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.”

It is a fact, that no temptation will happen to you but such as is common to every child of God ; and God is able, when any temptation comes to you, no matter from whom or from where it comes, to make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. When you say these words of your Teacher each morning, think for a moment, what are the temptations which generally meet you in the daytime ; and in saying “Lead us not into temptation,” add, specially this or that temptation.

Be sure, that if you do this thoughtfully and in earnest, you will have more strength to resist when the time comes. Every temptation conquered, is a step gained upon the hill-side of the Celestial Mountains, and each step higher in the rocky way, brings you nearer within sight of the Celestial City, where those who have overcome temptation shall walk in white robes because they are worthy, and shall reign as kings for ever and ever, while bending low before the throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords, they raise the song of triumph—

“Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.”



When Jesus had finished teaching this prayer, He had done all that had been asked of Him. At least, it would have been so, if He had desired to do nothing more than teach so many words for repetition. But the deeper, more important part of this lesson has yet to come. His friends might have thought, that if they just said over these words, "Our Father," they had done all that was required. Many of their Rabbis would have taught them so; but they needed and we need to know, not only in *what form* to pray, but *how*, in *what spirit* to pray.

This story is the lesson.

You may learn it in three words, in one of St. Paul's letters, "Pray without ceasing."

It is of all things a lesson which we need to learn; easy enough to repeat, but difficult to learn, as a lesson must be learnt, if it is to become a part of us and be really our own.

Have you never started on a walk to a place, the distance to which was much longer than you thought? Have you never sighed, "Oh, we never seem to get any nearer; let us go back"? Have you never been tempted to throw away some puzzle you were working at, with an impatient "Oh, I shall never be able to do it"?

Yet, you must know, that if you had but walked steadily on, you would have come to the place for which you started; if you had used but

a little more patience, each effort to make out the puzzle, would have brought you nearer to finding it out. So that I think you may satisfy yourself (you will not need to take it on my word) that every child and every man and woman who conquers the common temptation to "give up" because a thing seems hard, or because it cannot be done all at once, is on the high road to success.

What is far more worth to us than ability or talent, is *patient, steady, determination to succeed*. And, happily, that is a gift which every one may win for himself. It is in the power of us all to go plodding along, slowly like the tortoise, but surely, till we reach the goal and find that others more fleet in the race come in after us, for many last will be first, and first last.

This, steady, patient determination, this *doggedness*, as it is sometimes called, has been the mark of great men and great nations. The Romans had their saying, "*Nil desperandum*," "Never despair," and they acted on it; they learnt the lesson. They spread from within the narrow walls of a town, battled with every obstacle, till the empire of the world was in their hands.

Englishmen have learnt the lesson too. It is this fixed determination to succeed, no matter at what cost, which is building up the English Empire in every quarter of the world, and causing the language which we speak to be the language of

the known world. This temper of the English is matter of general remark. A writer of our own, speaks of the "silent pleasure, so dear to every Englishman, of enduring, resisting, and struggling with something and not giving way;" and a notable Frenchman distinguishes an Englishman by the "force of character by which he masters himself, and rises and resists misfortune, sorrow, and disappointment."

If we English people are all this, can it be that we fail to make our very own this lesson which the great King would have us learn, from the story of the man who came for help to his friend at midnight?

Why, all that we have to learn is, to practice this very same calm patient determination which we have been talking about, when we bend on our knees and say lovingly the "Our Father."

That is *all* that we are to learn at the moment; yet I told you it was hard to learn.

For while we pray that the name of God may be hallowed and His kingdom come, it will often seem as though we prayed and He heard not. Those who openly hate or deride Him are so many; worse, far worse, among those who *pretend* to hallow His name, there is so much sham and make-believe, that I warn you that when you grow older, you will find it often very difficult to keep your confidence and trust in God's promise to hear you.

Nor will you wait till you are grown up, to have

the same feeling of disappointment and doubt when you say, "Forgive us our trespasses," and "Lead us not into temptation." For I am sure you will find, each day you live, that you have given way to temptation, and have not been always careful to forgive others in the same way as you ask to be forgiven.

A little boy was saying his prayers one night: "Please God bless papa and mamma, make them good, and bless Minnie." Then he stopped. His mother added, "And Bob." The little fellow waited a minute and then said, "No, God, not Bob, because he drowned my cat to-day."

It was very hard, I am sure, for that child to forgive Bob; and depend upon it, there will, as I tell you, be difficulties in making a steady determined resolve when we say our Lord's Prayer.

Are you going to give up? You, who are English—of a race that will not be beaten! You, who are children of God, of a race that *cannot be beaten*! You, who are of royal birth, a King's child; the heir of a kingdom to which the whole world and its glory is as nothing! Why, you are fighting the battle for God, while He and the dear Christ and the holy angels look on waiting for your victory. You are not going to run away! Neither Englishmen nor sons of God do that. How could you? why should you? Victory is certain, if only

you will stand firm. You are the standard-bearer of your King, and *you are upon your honour*.

I shall have more to say to you about prayer by-and-bye, when we come to the story of The Unjust Judge, but now I beg of you to think over this one short lesson of the loved Master, to pray this prayer of His without ceasing.

You can do so, just as it was explained to you, we may forgive seventy times seven in a day, by *living in the spirit of prayer*. Talk with our Father as often as you can. When there is so much to remind you of Him, you surely cannot forget Him. Every time that you see a noble deed done in Christ's name, and hear men tell of our Father's surpassing goodness; or when words of contempt for God reach your ear, and acts of Christians which are mean and wicked come to your notice, at all such times you can pray, "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come."

Both the good and the evil that is in the kingdom *around* you, will thus lead you to pray *without ceasing*, and so too it will be in the *hidden kingdom* of your heart. When there has been failure on your part, when you have been weak enough to give way to temptation, you will be forced to pray, though it may be wearily and with sighs and tears, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" and when you have had a triumph, when you feel that a step has been gained, an evil temper has

got less hold upon you, and that by the might of Christ you are keeping under this lower nature of yours, and becoming, however slowly, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect, then there will be the same earnestness, indeed, but more joy in your prayer. There may be even sometimes a longing for more temptation, at the very moment when you pray "Lead us not into temptation." In the first flush of victory, you may be eager for more chances of conquest.

Let me counsel you against that feeling. Good soldiers do not fight except when it is necessary. Never go out in search of temptations, for if you do, you are playing traitor to the King whom you have begged to keep you from them. Often enough they will force themselves on you, and then meet them manfully, in His name who was tempted without ever yielding.

Pray without ceasing, at all times and in all places, because prayer is the armour which alone can defend you against evil. While you are in loving talk with your father or mother on earth, you do not feel the same inclination to do wrong as at many other times. Talk then with God whenever you are able, so that when you feel Him near and His eye upon you, when you can hear His loving voice, you may be perfectly safe even in the midst of temptation.

I know that this lesson will take time to learn ;

but there is no Teacher so gentle and patient as your Father in heaven. Never give in ; never cease to pray, and then here in this story there is the promise of Christ, that if men who are evil, will give good gifts to their children for the asking, how much more will your Heavenly Father give you His Holy Spirit.

By that Spirit, you will be made strong to conquer evil, and will be changed into the image and likeness of your Father. Led by that Spirit, you will in veriest truth be children of God ; and when the time comes for you to lay aside this natural body, that it may return to the earth as it was, your true self, in which has dwelt the everlasting life of the Holy Spirit, shall return to Him who gave it. Having asked honestly and faithfully, you shall obtain ten thousand times more than you asked ; having sought with eagerness, you shall find with ecstasy ; and unto you who have knocked constantly and with importunity, shall the gates of heaven be opened wide by angel hands.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RICH FOOL.

THE last story we read, was told by our dear Lord in answer to a question put to Him. This one, about a foolish man, who thought that to be rich was everything, is the reply to some one who wanted Christ to interfere between him and a brother of his, in a family quarrel. No doubt he had been astonished at the teaching of Jesus, and the authority which He possessed without seeming to strive after it; he had heard the wise answers given to one person and another, and so this man thought he would get the great Teacher on his side in the dispute, and force his brother to give up a portion of the property.

We know nothing about the man or his family, and need not trouble about them. He got his answer, and it was one that let men see plainly that for Jesus there was other work than to make Himself a judge of family squabbles.

“Who,” says the Teacher, “made Me a judge



or a divider over you?" And passing from this petty matter, which had been allowed to separate brother from brother, He turns to the crowd and gives them, in this parable, such a lesson as they could not but think about, and it is one to which I hope you will now listen, in the very words of Him who so dearly loves you. Attend to the story and the lesson, for if there has been one time more than another when it needed to be learnt, if there were ever a country in which this parable needed to be proclaimed upon the housetops, that time is this nineteenth century, and that country is England.

Sometimes, Jesus leaves you to find out the lesson of His parables; here He tells it you first of all, and then follows it with a story to keep it ever fresh in your memory.

"See and keep yourselves from all covetousness."

That is the lesson. Now for the story.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he reasoned with himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have no place in which to store my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do; I will pull down my barns and build greater, and I will store there all my fruits and my goods, and will say to my soul, "Soul, thou hast many goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."' But God said to him, 'Fool, this

night thy soul is required of thee ; and whose will those things be which thou didst prepare ? ”

Just like that man, says our divine Teacher, is every one who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Do you think the man was to blame ? Some people might say he was not. He may have worked hard and patiently for many years ; have denied himself holidays ; gone on with that calm, steady perseverance of which I was speaking in the last chapter. Here was his success. He had sown, why should he not reap ? He had worked, why should he not enjoy himself ?

There are many persons among us who would say to this man, “ Quite right too ; enjoy yourself ; spend what you have worked for so hard ; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”

Why should he not ?

For this simple reason : what he had stored up was *not his own*. What he meant to spend, *did not belong to him*.

That very night he found out that it was so. If his fruits were his, why did he not keep them ? if the barns were his own, how was it that he left them so sorely against his will ?

If I were lent money what would you think of me, if I used it all as my own and never offered to repay it ? Yet that is the way in which this rich man acted.

The good God had lent him time, and every moment of it had been filled with hard work. He had lent him health, and his strength had all been spent in money-grubbing. "A wonderfully hard-working man," so his neighbours said; "sure to get on." God had lent him talent, and he had employed it to make as much money as possible. "A clever man," he was called; "sure to die rich." In fact, he was what the world calls "a very successful man," and it never seemed to strike anybody that he was a robber,—dishonest, mean, and a fool into the bargain.

"Can a man rob God?" This fellow was trying to do it. He never gave a thought to the creditor to whom every farthing which he had was due. He possessed no one single thing that had not been lent him of God's goodness, but he was going to keep it all for himself, never troubling to say as much as a thank-you for it. From whence came his health and strength; whence came his cleverness and shrewdness? Why had he not been born poor, or maimed, or halt, or blind? Why, but of God's free love; why, but because God had given him so much in hope that *he would do much*.

He was in sober earnest, a fool. The man was not young. Many, who had been friends of his must have died, and perhaps he may have had to manage some of their money. He must have gone about a great deal and seen much of men; known of

sicknesses, accidents, and all those things which so often happen to overcloud the sunshine of life.

Yet such a thing could not happen to him, he thought ; or, more likely, never troubled himself with the thought at all. He would hear of a friend's death, but in his heart felt sure that his was to be a long life and that for the present, there was no reason to vex himself with thinking of anything unpleasant.

Yet, to-night, he is stripped of everything, before he has enjoyed anything. To-night his life is required. While his barns are filled to the roof ; while his bags of silver stand piled uncounted in his storeroom ; while the banquet is being prepared and the golden vases filled with wine ; while instruments of music and dancers are being collected to charm his ear and eye as he lies luxuriously on the couch, he is called forth, to answer Him whom he had been robbing these many years, and whose gifts he had meant to squander on his own enjoyment.

Notice now the difference between a wise man and a fool.

The merchantman gave up everything in order that he might gain something of exceeding worth, but this man had no thought for any thing save what was really worthless, worthless even while it lasted, and lasting only for the moment. He thought nothing of, cared nothing for, the pearl of great price.

Yet it was within his reach all the time ; but suppose an offer had been made to him, as it was to another rich man, " Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," do you think he would have accepted it? I fear me not. His treasure was on earth, and where his treasure was, there was his heart.

Can you call him anything but a fool, for laying up his treasure where moth and rust would corrupt it, and where thieves might break through and steal, careless all the while about storing his riches where they could never perish, or placing his jewels in the King's regalia, where they would have been untarnished for ever ?

" Thou fool." A hard name that. It is our Father who is said, in the parable, to use it of the man. We had better not do so. You know the proverb, " People who live in glass houses should not throw stones." Don't let us blame him, lest we should be blaming ourselves, but rather let us keep his miserable end in this world before us, as his voice from the other world rings in our ears, echoing sadly, as it does, the King's words :—

" Beware of all covetousness, for not because one has abundance doth a man's life consist in the things which he possesseth."

*All* covetousness, that is, all greedy desire for *overmuch* of anything in this life ;—any sort of it, is

what our dear Lord tells us to beware of. All over-longing to add one thing to another just *for the sake of giving pleasure to ourselves*; any anxiety to get more of some nice thing, for the purpose of keeping it for our own; any effort to become richer in hope of being lazy and spending our money in eating and drinking, sight-seeing, and so-called pleasure;—this is what we have to beware of, and why?

Remember the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, and you will be able to answer me.

Why but because if too great labour is spent on all these things, some of them worthless in themselves, some good enough, we may come to think about them too much, and our hearts will be set on them, till there is too little thought given to the true riches, the priceless pearl, the one only everlasting treasure—the love of God. The King has reminded us in a wonderful way how terribly strong the temptation is, to forget the pearl of great price, so long as we are busying ourselves to collect smaller ones.

“It is easier,” He said, “for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,” which is an Eastern way of saying, “It is very, very difficult.” And that it is so, you may be sure. The young man to whom Jesus spoke the words went away sad; for he could not bring himself to part with his money (with all

these pearls as he thought them), which he had been collecting, in exchange for the one which the King of heaven was offering him.

We should be very angry if any one called us fools, yet, thinking over the matter, you will agree that we are nothing but fools, if, turning away from Him who brings to us the true riches, we spend all our time and thoughts and longings upon what can give pleasure merely to our animal nature, and which, at any moment, may be lost to us, when God says, "Thy soul is required of thee."

My children, would you be so senseless as to place all that you prized, within reach of the rising tide, and sit there on the sands, till a sudden sweep of the waves carried everything which you valued into the deep sea? Would you spend your every penny on something which could last only for one minute?

You know very well that all the many toys about which we are so eager, are things that give pleasure chiefly to our bodies, which ought to be mere servants to work for us, in storing up everlasting treasure in heaven. Our servants are with us but for a time; *our bodies are not ourselves*, and are we better than fools if we are for ever thinking about them and nothing about our real life?

What is our life on earth? St. James in his letter speaks of it, as "a vapour which appears for a little time and then vanishes away." A little

mist, such as you may see on an autumn morning, when the sun rises, and which is gone when the air has become warm,—that is the picture by which he would show you how uncertain, how short your life is in this world.

“Is life, then, worth living?” I think I hear some of you ask.

I don’t wonder at the question, for if St. James had said life in this world was a *dark* vapour, he would have been giving a true description of what it is to many. Carry back your recollection to the poor little ones under the arches—shivering, sick, starving brothers and sisters of yours. If your life were like the life of one of them, would you think life worth living?

But there are, even in this world, lives which are as bright as a garden of roses, yet, spite of that, this picture of St. James’ is a true one, even of the sunniest of them. For like a vapour it may have vanished before the day is over, or next morning comes, even as did the life of this poor rich fool. And so it has come to pass, that when all has been happy and bright in lifetime, some men have said (just as this man in the parable) to their soul, “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,” while for those whose lot has been a miserable one, who have lain, weary, sick, and dying, at the doors of the gay revellers of life, there has come the advice from within, “Curse God, and die.”



Why should they not? Why, but because of *the very name of God*. God, or the good, must be somewhere and must be going to do the right thing. He could not always leave sorrowing and suffering ones, to be trampled under foot and made a prey of. The good One *must* do the right, and would, one day, unravel the tangled skein of the world's doings; *right doing*, or righteousness, alone would last, when all which was wrong and evil had passed away.

There would (they felt) be one day a triumph of right and justice, but of what use would *that* triumph be to them, if *they* did not share it, if *their* wrongs were left a burden to them? It was not, and I ask you to notice this particularly, that all mankind were *longing* for an endless life; for many, as you will come to learn when you read ancient books, said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and were happy only *so long* as they fancied that their death in this world was the end of them.

They exhausted their animal nature with pleasure; they positively wore out their strength with the hard work of pleasing themselves; they heaped on themselves enjoyment and luxury, till their poor brutal nature fell down under the weight of it all, and became so sick with the sweets of life, so surfeited, so overfull of all which was cloying to the taste, that they could neither bear more of it nor wish for more of it.

No, it was not mere animals of this sort, who were at one time the rulers and curses of the great heathen nations, it was not such as these, who knew the truth about life or could tell what it is. That truth has been set forth by the noble army of martyrs—the countless myriads of all time and all ages ; of sorrowing, suffering ones, who while their eyes swam in death under the blows of their persecutors, could look beyond the shadows to where God was standing, keeping watch above His own.

Nor is it only great sufferers such as these, who have shown us the truth. In every age of the world countless hosts of unknown ones, amid toil and poverty and privation, while seeing the wrong and the false triumphing for the time, have yet heard and repeated to others the whisper which had reached their own hearts, that *it could not be for long*, and that for patient souls, there was a *golden age* to come. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in an unknown world, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption,” says one. “I know that He who avengeth me liveth,” says another, “and though my skin be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger.”

Stop here and notice one of the great and grand purposes of sorrow and suffering. Painful as it is, we owe to it the keeping up among mankind, of this unshaken faith in what is called *immortality*.

—that is, a confidence that our life in this world is *only* the beginning of our life, and that beyond this world, is one where sad hearts shall be comforted and tears wiped away for ever.

A noble hope, an inspiriting belief, is it not? Yet it was nothing more than hope and belief, *till* One came on earth who declared Himself to be the way, and the truth, and *the life*; who said, that all who followed Him should have *everlasting* life, and that they should never perish, nor should any one pluck them out of His hand. And in most marvellous parable, He went on to tell men that He was the bread which had come down from heaven, of which if they but ate they should live for ever. Yet once more He startled those who listened to Him, with words which we hear still in the quiet churchyard, where we lay the bodies of our loved ones—"He that is true to Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

*And He proved all that He had said.*

You remember what happened on the first great Easter morning, while Mount Olivet lay in shadow, and the Kedron reflected the light of the morning star. He who had been dead was alive again. Since the day when the cloud received Him from out of the sight of His faithful ones, the hope and belief which strengthened sorrowing souls of old time *has become a certainty*, and millions of men, women, and

little children have declared their faith in the life everlasting.

Nor did our blessed Saviour leave us in any doubt as to *what this everlasting life is*, or how we are to obtain it.

*To know God, the only true One, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent, was the everlasting life*; and if you will go back to what I told you in the parable of The Pearl of Great Price, as to what knowing a lesson means, you will presently understand the difference between the life of which St. James speaks, and our *real* everlasting life.

Because, you see, the dear Lord tells us that to enter into this life we must keep the commandments; and what those are, as set forth by Jesus, you can tell me?

Yes, to love God with all our soul and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Is not this in strange harmony, or rather in most beautiful and perfect harmony, with all those hopes and beliefs which had been buoying up men's hearts in the ages before Jesus came? Had they not longed for the good One, for God? Had they not waited for that coming of universal happiness, which could only be enjoyed when men loved God above all, and their neighbour as themselves?

Do you sometimes fancy that what is called *religion*, is a thing which children cannot understand; that it is to be found in books which you

will read as you grow older, just as you will about botany and chemistry? Put away from any such fancy, if you have it.

Will you look for a moment at the front as it is called,—that is, the first picture in the part of this book, and tell me—do you think little children gathered around the dear Lord climbing on His knee, were puzzled with Him? Did you find it hard to understand Him? They may not have been able to make out the meaning of the word He used, but they were certain of that He loved them and that they loved Him.

Ay, and to you little ones it is given to know of the wonderful things of God, because the Church has made them plain.

And herein is the wonder, that *everlasting life is love* and that *love is everlasting life*, because the law is all summed up in this—God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law, that of it *perfectly*, the keeping of the commandments *faultlessly*; and that—you have the word of God for it—is everlasting life.

You look puzzled, but I hope to make you understand; at least, if you do not, it will be my fault, not yours.

You have seen a lot of little puppies scrambling about after their mother? They pull her or scramble upon her while she lies there quiet

as if they thought it were her only business in life to oblige the youngsters. You say she loves them. Well, I am not sure about that. Perhaps she does for the time, but if you were to take away those puppies from her for a year or two and then bring them back, she would take no notice of them, and very likely fight some of them. No doubt she has what is called instinct. Thousands of dogs before her, have done as she is doing, and so a habit born with her has become, as we say, a second nature, just as a habit of doing anything, whether good or bad, may become with us all. More than this, there is actual pleasure to herself in thus sharing the frolics of the nursery. However, if you like to say, she loves her pups, there is no objection to your doing so.

Children have often been heard to say they love the summer-time and sunshine. And no wonder, especially if they live in the country. Oh, the glorious scrambles through the woods and fields, while a rabbit rushes from us helter-skelter into the corn, or an anxious mother-partridge fidgets all her brood before her into the thick hedge! And then to climb into some oak-tree, and sit in its shady boughs for luncheon, watching the oats and barley throwing themselves joyously about in the breeze, till one might think the fields had dressed up in feathers of gold to honour the sunshine; while the statelier, soberer wheat, in light brown dress, seems

playing the part of elder people, who make s bows to one another, as people used to hundred years ago, when they danced with more grace and at much more sensible hours they do now !

Or, as the afternoon draws on, and we cor a little clear pond in the heart of the wood, down beside it, where a thicket of those fair the forest, the birches, keep off from us the in the west. Great ferns tower over our thickly mixed with beautiful but deadly p foxgloves. Listen ! there is the voice of a brook falling over some stones into the pond the hum of a dragon-fly skimming over its su Perfect enjoyment, is it not ? I don't wonder you love the summer.

Why is it that you do ?

Of course, because, as you will tell me, you it all so much. Your body is warm and comfort everything around is pretty to look at ; the nothing to cause you pain or to give you trouk

Let me tell you then at once, this sort of is *not* everlasting life. The rich fool had jus same kind of love for his summer-time. The were to be so heavy that he must build new for them, and *then* how he would enjoy hin There was nothing everlasting about his lov it was his mortal corruptible life which he l and that very night this life was required of hi

You love your father and mother; but if you think about it, you will find that you love them in a different way to what you do the summer. It is not always summer-time between you and them. Clouds may come between you because of your disobedience or naughtiness. They may have had to punish you more than once, they may have to do so again; and yet you love them. And perhaps you would love them the more, if you knew *how hard* it was for them to punish. I have known men shrink from having to punish their children, far more than they would have done from giving pain to themselves, and they have asked God to give them strength to be true to Him and to their children before they could punish. And I have known the children of such men, the moment that the punishment was over, put up their little pursy mouths to be kissed even while the tears were blinding them. And if all the truth must be told, the eyes of the father were as full as those of the child.

If you have ever known such love as that, and I am sure that many of you have, there you have the key to the seeming wonder, that *love is everlasting life*.

Because while father and child love with such strength as that, nothing can by any means separate them. And when your love to God has become so true, so deep, so real, that you love Him above all



things, then will you have found the fulness of an everlasting life, *because nothing can separate you from Him who is the very life itself.*

Meantime, you have passed the entrance gate into that life, because, God helping you, you have promised to keep the commandments ; to fulfil the law ; to love your neighbour as yourself *for the love of God*—that is, because He, whom you seek to love above all, loves that neighbour, and has bid you love him too.

We cannot lose sight of this love of God. Whatever subject we begin with, we always get back to *it*. It is as though we were rambling along the mountain crest in some island, and ever and anon, whichever way we looked, caught sight of the blue boundless sea, beyond which we can gaze no further.

It is so, really and truly. In whatever we may have to do in life, it is the love of God which should prompt us. In every difficulty, it is the love of God which will guide us. In every trouble, it is the love of God which will comfort us.

Oh, how glorious for us, my darlings, if, when the things which give us pleasure here on earth are fading and passing away ; when we leave these bodies to be laid in the ground to help on the growth of the brilliant flowers and make the world look brighter for those coming after us, we ourselves can glide calmly out, with angel-guardians,

over that still sunlit ocean of our Father's love, and enter on the fulness of our everlasting life with Him, whom having not seen, we love !

If this everlasting life is the love of God, you can surely understand the dear Lord's warning words, which are His lesson in this parable, "Beware of all covetousness."

For if you allow yourself to long after, to be always on the outlook for what is pleasant and nice, there can be little or no time for you to think about your loving Father and all His love for you. What you are always thinking about will fill your thoughts, and the good God and the blessed Christ will be turned from the door of your heart. They bring you everlasting life ; these pleasures of the world are but the toy of to-day, broken to-morrow. If, by any terrible self-will of yours, you were to choose them in place of Him who has lent them to you, believe me, that in some terrible day of future sorrow, you would be the first to confess that you were not a rich fool, but a miserably poor one.

One word more, this everlasting life of yours is the *free gift* of your Father, God. He is the love and the life, which lasts for ever, and which never changes. He gives it to you, *in* and *through His Son* ; that is to say, it is yours because you are one with Jesus ; because you share His Divine nature. *It is that which is really you, your very true self.*

Need I remind you of *how* you may preserve this everlasting life in Christ? Why, how do you preserve anything which you value? Is it not by taking care of it, by often looking at it, by watching it, and doing your utmost to keep it out of all danger?

Well, then, do the same with the love of God. Keep it in your very heart of hearts, and turn out anything that seems likely to take its place. Listen each day for the voice of the dear Saviour, who is ever close beside you. It is in Him and through Him that you have everlasting life; can you do anything but love Him for this priceless gift?

And if ever, when you grow older, men should tempt you with the pleasures of what we call this life, on my very knees I beg of you, let the solemn warning of our dear Lord in this story come to you with the might and majesty of rolling thunder—

“Beware of all covetousness.”

Every mere animal pleasure that you set your heart upon, every worldly gain and advantage which you seek *for its own sake*, will take up some of the room in your heart which might be filled with the love of God. Do the work you have to do in the world, heartily and *for the love of God*, not for the love of the world. If honest and true work should, as it often does, bring you riches or honour, accept them as loans from your Father, with thank

fulness, but with trembling. Beg of Him that these things may never take the place of Himself in your heart. They can be no part of your everlasting life, for the world is passing away and the pleasures thereof, but whoever does the will of God, liveth and abideth for ever.

I told you that this parable is, of all others, the parable for the days in which we live, and that is why I am talking so much about it; forgive me if I weary you.

There never was a time, when men were more busy seeking after pleasure and comfort than they are now. There is a longing to make the life on earth as prosperous, as grand, as fine, in the eyes of other people, as it possibly can be made. The wise merchant gave up all his lesser pearls in order that he might secure one of priceless worth. But nowadays, numbers of people are throwing away true diamonds that they may pick up sham ones. Honesty is cast to the winds if only one may become rich. Truth is given up, if only another can be "thought better of" by the world. Fancy that! being thought "better of" because he is false and lying. Meantime, there are a few clever people very busy telling these others that there is no such thing as everlasting life; in fact, that they are only animals and nothing more; that in a very short time they will die like a dog or a cabbage, and there will be an end of them. Is it any

wonder if persons who are befooled by such teaching, should shout, "Come on, then—a short life and a merry one; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"?

My children, there are words of our Holy Book about dying and death, so startling, so awful, that as we think over them, we shall needs hold our breath as though we were on the verge of some fearful precipice, and looking down, saw nothing but distance and darkness.

We hear about "the second death," so that the mere coming to an end of our mortal body, cannot be what is meant. This second death is spoken of by our gentle brother Christ, in words which make it more loathsome, more horrible than I can give you any full idea of. For there was a valley near Jerusalem where, in old time, every abomination had been practised, and which had become to the Jewish people the one spot to be hated and avoided. To that place all the refuse of the city was carried, and there some of it was devoured as decaying matter by worms, and some of it was destroyed by fire, that it might not bring pestilence and death into the city. That is the revolting, sickening place, which the Bringer of everlasting life to men took as a picture of the second death—the loss of everlasting life.

I cannot add anything to the terrible picture, but I dare not take anything from it. If you have

gone with me so far, you will be sure of this much—the second death must be the very opposite of everlasting life. If the one is union with God, the other must be separation from Him. If God be love, then the second death means “envy, hatred, malice, and all want of love.” If God be the truth, then the second death must mean falseness and wickedness; if God be light, then the second death must be what Jesus once called it, “outer darkness.”

These are terrible things; true, *but they are of men's making*. A person who destroys his life in this world is called a suicide, he falls by his own hand, as it is said. Into that second death, *no one can fall save by his own hand*. All who die that death are suicides. It is not their loving Father who takes away from them the everlasting life, but they deliberately cast it from them.

I feel certain, that the dear Christ did not tell us about this second death, just to frighten us or make us unhappy. He told us the simple truth, and there is no need to be frightened at it, because it is He who has given to every one of us the promise, that if we are true to Him nothing shall pluck us out of His hand; and that if we fight the battle against what is evil and selfish for His dear love's sake, we can never be hurt by the second death.

Of the everlasting life in your Father's home I can tell you nothing. It is all too great and

glorious for words of men. It hath not even entered into the heart of man to imagine the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. And that life is *yours*, for you are the King's children ; it is all yours by inheritance, by free gift, and neither angel, man, nor devil can take it from you.

You are living this everlasting life even now ; it is begun in you. Every conquest over wrongdoing makes it stronger within you ; each act of love to God makes you more sure, more safe of keeping it.

Let your thoughts then be often of it, and of all who have been released from this world, and who are enjoying their everlasting life in the world which as yet we cannot see. There is the blessed One Himself, who won life for all men. All the saints are with Him, and the loved ones whom perhaps you hear sometimes spoken of as "dead,"—strange, unmeaning word, as it is, when used about those who have the fulness of everlasting life !

You will be among them soon, so look forward to the time with pleasure and joy. I know not the words, the outburst of delight, in which you will break forth when you see the loved One "as He is." But I am sure that among the many words of adoring thanks on your lips, will be those which St. Peter once used, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of everlasting life."







THE LOST SHEEP.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LOST SHEEP.

THAT little word *lost*, reminds me of the wind coming through the woods in winter time, when the few brown leaves which are left, cling fondly to the branches, as though fearing that the time to say farewell had come. *Lost*—the word brings up thoughts of disappointment and sorrow. Something has gone which we valued, and the place in our home or our heart which it filled, is empty and cold. You, children, have lost things many a time, and cried about it; but the crying did no good; and as you grow older you will find out, that the best plan, when you lose a thing, is not to cry, but to search thoroughly for it.

Sometimes you will hear persons speak of their loved ones who have gone to our Father's home as *lost*, and that shows you how our everyday language may be false, untrue, without our meaning it to be so. Try, I pray you, to understand the words you use, and never, because it is the custom, get into the way of talking untruth. How can

people be *lost* who are safe with our Father? For though the word is now and then used to explain that we are separated from some one or something, it is much more commonly—and I fear in the case I am talking of—understood to mean, not only that we are separated from a person, but *that we do not know where that person is*. And if in that way we talk about our dear ones who have gone before us into the world of light, then, I assure you, we are saying what is untrue, and what is absurd.

You have friends in India or Australia; are they *lost*?

"Oh, but," you say, "I get letters from them, so I know that they are not lost."

True, you may have a letter every week now, or you may hear at any moment by the telegraph. But that was not the case years ago. Then it took many months before a letter could come from one side of the world to the other. But friends away from England, were no more *lost* then than they are now. Livingstone, the great African discoverer, was not lost because there was no news of him for years; nor was McClure, when he was away battling with the ice barriers at the North Pole.

You have seen on a clear, summer day, a little speck go floating past along the blue sky. It is a balloon, carrying three or four people. They cannot see you, nor can you see them, nor is there any

possible way of sending a message to them. But you know they are not lost. You tell me, "Oh, but I can see them when they come down." No doubt, and it is just as true that we can see our friends again, when we go up to the home of God our Father. We shall be able to talk lovingly with them exactly as we used to do here, and to learn from them of the wonders of that country where the day lasts from morning to morning.

Of course, if you think but little about the friends who have gone home, if you seldom talk about them, or talk *with them*, then I fear that it may become quite natural for you to speak of them as lost. But this is not what your Father would have you do. He would have them be to you dearer friends, more real and loving helps than they could ever be on earth. They are a cloud of witnesses to you of our Father's love, and of the everlasting life which you and they alike share through the dear Christ.

Listen, then, for their voices; as their prayers and songs go up amid their joyful work, can you believe that you are not in their thoughts; that your name is not often on their lips? And will you talk about them as lost, as "poor." Nay, rather have them in mind as the happiest of the happy. Let their names come to your lips each day when on your knees you draw, oh, so close to our dear Father for your talks of love. When

you tell Him of your mistakes and your sorrow for your want of love, and beg Him for His own love's sake to help you to love Him more.

Then your much forgiven and purified soul can rise upwards and strive to look through the dim distance which seems, only seems, to separate us from our loved ones at home. See them as they were, but without weakness, and sorrow, and sin; see them without one shade of sadness on their face, for in their world they know only of joy and smiling, and the children cannot tell what it is to cry. Pray our Father of His goodness to hasten the coming of His kingdom, so that you, and all those who have gone away home in the true faith of His holy name, may have the perfectness of joy in His everlasting kingdom.

Well, then, when Jesus said, the while He was telling this story of the lost sheep, that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, He did not think of those who are safe for ever beyond the chance of loss.

But many whom the religious people of the day called accursed, were crowding round to hear His winning words. Among them were the lower officers of the Roman Government, who went from house to house, and were often grasping and hard in collecting the moneys which the Jews had to pay for being conquered. And with them, came some whose sinfulness was so public, that there could be

no doubt about it. From this mixed crowd of people, the Pharisees and scribes turned away with contempt, and murmured that the Teacher should even notice them.

And then He, with that smile of surpassing tenderness fixed upon those who had come to Him wearied and sick of sin, judged their adversaries out of their own mouth in this short parable, and made hopeful for ever, the heart of every one who has lost sight of God and of the way to the Fatherland.

“What man of you,” asks the Christ, “having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he is come home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.’ I say unto you, that even so there will be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.”

Joy over one sinner that repenteth. That means, joy because one who has missed or lost something, finds out that he has lost it.

If you were to drop your purse in your morning walk, would you not very soon miss it? would not the missing it be a real and great trouble to you? and would you not run back hurriedly in search

of it? You are acting a little scene of sin and repentance.

For the sorrow which comes of sin, is the feeling that we are at a greater distance from our Father than we were : that we have lost something. We cannot look Him in the face, because we have done what He bid us not do. We have lost sight of Him, and never again can we have peace and rest in our heart till we have *repented*, till we know that it is the loss of *Him* that is making us wretched, and till we make up our mind to turn to Him and ask His loving forgiveness.

When our love to God is strong, when we are much with Him, talking to Him night and morning as well as in the day time, we are pretty sure to repent very soon after we have sinned, for how can we bend before Him in our prayers while we are making His heart sad? How can we use all the dearest names which we keep for Him, and not be sorrowful to think that we have set ourselves against Him and insisted on having our own way rather than His? Ah, believe me, the tear that starts as you remember His love and your disobedience, will sparkle more brightly in the garden of Paradise than did ever dewdrop on the bosom of a rose at morning! For you have it on the word of the blessed One Himself, that over you, as you kneel there repentant, the hearts of holy angels are joyous; joyous because you have turned back in

search of the love of God. He that seeketh findeth, and while your words, "Father, I am sorry," are but half finished, His royal voice has spoken, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

Now, just for the reason that when we are near to God—that is, when we are trying to love Him and do what He would have us do—we are quick to miss Him and turn back hurriedly if we are wandering away from Him, I say, it is just for this reason that we should struggle so desperately against temptation to go away from Him at all.

Because the oftener we leave His side, the oftener we give in to the temptation to please ourselves, the longer will it be before we find out that we have lost our treasure, and so we shall not turn to seek for it; and then one more little bit of self-indulgence, self-pleasing, will start up in our path and we shall stray farther and farther from the road homeward, and, if we do miss something, shall be tempted to say, "Oh, there will be plenty of time to go back for it presently."

Do not be deceived; it is time *now*, more than time to turn back. *Sin is separation from God.* Every unforgiven sin puts you farther away from Him. Can you tell what that means? Did not we see in the last story that to be with Him, in Him, is everlasting life? What, then, must it be to be away from Him? Only stop and think, and you will not, cannot choose death for yourself. I



do not speak of the death of this animal body, which matters nothing ; but of that second death, which means trampling in the mire the white robe with which the loving Saviour has dressed you ; throwing from you the royal crown which the angels are now making for you in heaven ; putting your back against the Celestial City, and stopping your ears to the voices of loved ones who are imploring you to come to them. May the good God in His love forbid it !

Yet I must tell you, that there have been thousands and thousands of children of God who, for a time, have fallen into such a terrible plight. Like these poor publicans and sinners who crowded round Jesus, they have altogether *lost their way* to the Father. Perhaps some of them have listened to such lies as were told them by the Pharisees, and as have been repeated since—that God had ceased to care for them ; that they were too sinful, too hardened in sin, to draw near to Him ; that they were truly *lost*, and lost they must be.

It needs but one glance from the dear Lord who lived and died for us, to wither all such lies into nothingness, just as in a minute you may trample and kill some weed at your feet. For this story shows, that it was those who were *lost* whom he came to seek. No matter how far they had wandered ; the more utterly, completely, they were lost, the more determined was He to seek after them, that He might bring them home rejoicing.

If you look at our picture, you will see that this sheep must have come far away from home, for the shepherd is on his way over the distant plain. Thus far it seems, the sheep does not know that it is lost, but it is coming to an end of the easy path; thorns and briars are stopping its merry run, and close at hand in the grass, lies a snake which waits only to be trodden on to sting. So it is with us when we wander away from God. For a while the way may seem easy; pleasing ourselves does for the moment give satisfaction; but in a little while, so surely as we sin, there will come sorrow. It is of the dear God's love, that it does come, *to make us think* where we are, and where we are going; to give us breathing time, to remember what we have lost; to make the truth flash upon us, that we no longer hear our Father's voice and that we have forgotten to talk to Him.

There, at that moment, when we stop to think, comes in the place for *repentance*: the chance of seeing things differently to what we have seen them; the hope of our finding out that we have lost all which was worth having. Pleasing ourselves, doing our own will, which was so agreeable, will now be hateful to us; for we shall find that by straying where we have done, *we have lost our Father*, and there is nothing left us save this servant of ours, this animal nature, which may droop and die at any moment. And if, of God's love, we

carry out our repentance ; if we *turn back* in search of Him whom we have lost, then the joy among the angels in heaven is very near, and they bend low over us, as though to grasp that joy at once.

I cannot believe that you children will go far from your Father, for it is not like children to do so. You are not perfect, but your hearts are surely too gentle, too loving, too fresh for you to determine to go away from the sweet Saviour who has His arms around you. The little children loved Him and kept near to Him when He was on earth, and surely you, too, will try and please Him, so that you may win one of those smiles of His, and that look of joyous happiness with which He made all hearts like summer. You will make your failures day by day, and tell your Father of them at night without fear or trembling. *Trust Him with all your heart's love; tell Him everything.* Keep nothing back, and while you are speaking He will forgive, and your rest will be "like angels' slumbers, pure and light."

To us who have grown older, this story of The Lost Sheep is *the story of all others*. It has come to millions of sorrowing souls, just as it did that day to the publicans and sinners, like the flash from some lighthouse comes to the sailor on a stormy night ; as the firm grasp of a father's hand at the very moment when it seemed we must fall over a steep precipice.

Why ?

Because, as we grow up, and the business and the pleasure and the worry of life increase around us, we are all in danger of losing the sound of our Father's voice, and wandering away from Him. We lose our "great Companion," and have only our servant for company. We may even come to love it so much, as to let it have its own will in everything! we may allow it to become, not merely our master, but our tyrant, our slave-driver. Fancy that!—we, the King's children, made slaves of by our own slave!

It is a sad picture this, so far, but I am bound to go on with it; I must tell you all the truth.

Once we have been made slaves of, we must follow where our hard task-master drives us; perhaps into the wild wilderness, where our sins become thorns and brambles to pierce us; perhaps into cold black darkness, where we can see nothing, and where we fall down longing that this cruel tyrant, as we have suffered it to become, this mortal body which has got the mastery of us, might be destroyed by death, hoping, yet despairing of dying ourselves along with it.

Such terrible hopeless sorrow need never be yours: never can be, if only you keep hold of our Father's hand; but I tell you that it has happened to many men and women, in order that you may understand what I said about this story being the best beloved in "The King's Story Book."

For to all and each one of such poor souls as have lost their way, it brings these words of the ever-blessed Christ—

“The Son of man is come, to *seek and to save* that which was lost.”

Picture to yourself one such poor wanderer so far away from His Father’s home. He has gone *his own way* ; added sin to sin ; forgotten God ; defied Christ, mocked at Him, and spurned His love. And here he is in the cold lone darkness, with none for company ; *lost*, hopelessly lost, so he thinks.

*But the Son of man*, yes, his own Elder Brother, has set out to seek Him. He is coming through the night, and a halo of glory round Him makes the darkness light. He is coming along the rough crooked path where this sad sinful wanderer has lost his way. The stones are so sharp, that His feet are bleeding, *for he is Son of man*. The thorns are so many and strong, that they tear Him as He passes along. But nothing turns Him from His search, and ever and again He calls in a voice to which the sweetest music sounds as discord, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

I told you that one of the great laws in the kingdom of heaven was—“Seek, and ye shall find.” If that be true about each one of us, how much more true must it be of our loving brother Jesus Christ.

*If He seek, He must find.*

Is not this truth, then, like life after death to any one who has so utterly lost himself, as to have given up all hope of finding the right way?

True enough, that St. Paul, when he was found by Jesus, fell blinded to the earth; true enough, that at Christ's look of grief, St. Peter wept bitterly—and no wonder. For the Son of Man has the glory of the Father, and if that glory shine suddenly into the midst of men's sins and darkness, the light may well be too bright to bear; just as if you were to go all at once from a dark room, into the dazzling summer sunshine.

But upon most of us, the glory dawns gently, quietly, and gradually, like the daybreak. For the Son of Man is *the love* of the Father, and when His voice breaks upon the ear, sorrowing because we were lost, it cannot but make us leap for joy, though tears of sorrow blind our eyes. Welcome those tears, if only the Good Shepherd carry us home again to the fold of God.

Let me finish with a story:—

In Canada there are large lakes, more like seas indeed, which are hard frozen in the winter, and at times there will suddenly come over them a thick mist, so thick that persons skating can see nothing, nor tell which way they are going. Near one of these lakes there lived a farmer, with two children, a boy and a girl, who were just about twelve and thirteen years old. Knowing the dangers of the

lake, their father never allowed them to do more than skate near the shore, where they could easily get home if the mist came down.

But one day, in his absence, the children strayed further than usual. The sun was setting, and the western sky was all aflame with gold and purple, which slowly vanished and gave place to a beautiful pale green. "Why, we could almost reach that green," said the boy; and, forgetful of time and distance, they flew over the ice, smooth and glittering in the sunset.

Presently the boy gave a cry, "Look, Minnie, the mist!" And as the colours faded in the west there came up rapidly a heavy cloud. They turned, but home was far out of sight; there was the high land, to be sure, but in their fright they could hardly recognize the hill which rose behind their home. They took hands and skated for their very lives, but the mist was too fast for them, and in a few minutes overtook them. They seemed to be suddenly wrapped in a cold wet mantle.

"Keep up, Minnie, we shall be all right yet," said the brother. But she stopped. One of her skates was broken, and she felt certain that mere walking would never enable them to reach home. Ronald took her on his back, but made little way, and the mist was so thick that he did not know where he was going. It grew colder, and the poor children shook with chill and fright.

"I cannot go on, dear Ronald," said Minnie; "leave me, darling, and try and get home yourself."

"Never," answered the brave boy. "If we are lost, Minnie, it shall be together." Then they stopped, for they knew that it was just as likely that if they moved, they might be going away from home as toward it.

They soon grew tired and disheartened. They had forgotten the distance gone over, in the pleasure of excitement, but now, when they remembered the long time they had been skating away from the land, they felt they must still be miles off and quite out of reach of any one's voice. But they would make an attempt to be heard; they called together as loud as they could, "Help! help!" but the only answer was the wind; there was not another sound, except the beating of their hearts.

Presently, Minnie sunk upon the ice, and then her brother knelt and held her in his arms that she might feel the cold as little as possible.

The mist did not lift, and the night came on.

"Minnie, my darling," whispered her brother, "we must die here; but we shall die together."

"It may be so," she answered, half dreamily; "but I feel sure *that our father will seek us.*"

Then they put their hands together and asked the dear God in heaven, that He would guide their father to them.



After a time, and it seemed an age to the children, they thought they could hear a faint noise far away. This gave them hope, and they sprung up and shouted. No answer for the moment ; and their hearts sunk. But stay—yes, there is a shout, very far off. Again and again they answer what they now feel certain is the voice of their father, and presently it draws nearer, and they keep on answering, for who can say whether they may not be passed in the thick mist ?

By-and-by they see lights dancing here and there and drawing nearer, and in a few minutes the children are in the arms of their father, who, by God's mercy, has found them at last.

Not one word of reproach ; not one sound of anger, but the strong arms are closed around them, and they are safe. Food, too, has been brought, and warm furs ; and then with care and the knowledge which comes of long training, the man and his companions start homeward with their dear burdens, who were lost but are found.

Keep this parable of The Lost Sheep in the very safest place of your heart, to be light on a dark day if ever it come to any one of you. I pray God it may not ; but if it does, it will only come through your own folly and your own fault.

If ever the mist of sin should overtake you far away from our Father's home ; if ever you should have sinned so deeply as to lose heart, and per-

haps give up all for lost ; if ever you seem alone with yourself ;—the sight of God gone, the hope of heaven vanished, the love which is now warm and strong, faded and cold and all but dead in your heart, then I implore you, by all that is dear to you in heaven and earth, turn your eyes to this picture of The Lost Sheep and take heart again ; for, be sure of this—

*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE GREAT SUPPER.

THERE is reason for thinking that the Jews, following the usual Eastern custom, took only two meals during the day: breakfast, which was taken, on the Sabbath Day at any rate, as late as noon; and in the evening there was dinner, or, as it is called in the New Testament, supper. The Roman conquest of Judæa, and much mixing with foreign nations, had made luxurious habits common among the Jews in our Lord's time, and the old fashion of sitting on the ground had given place to reclining round the table on couches, some of which were of costly material, and covered with cushions of beautiful workmanship. The couches were placed so as to form three sides of a square, the fourth side being left open for the servants to pass to and fro, as they served the meals and handed the basin of water in which the hands were always washed before the meal began.

On these couches the guests lay, not at full length, but with the left arm supported by a pillow



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l the body in a half-upright position, so that the al might be eaten in comfort ; while, if it so ased the guest, a more comfortable, lounging itude could be indulged in afterwards. Thus, : couch had the advantage of our dining-chair l easy-chair in one. It was usual to put three ests on each couch, the second resting on a hion placed about on a line with the waist of : first, so that each one could readily talk with : friend behind him, and talk, if he so wished, hout being overheard by others.

You will understand from this what is said in : fourth Gospel, about the Last Supper : " Now, ere was leaning on the bosom of Jesus " the ciple whom Jesus loved. Supper was finished, d John had pushed the pillow a little further ck, so that he might be nearer to his Master ; d then, when Peter beckoned to him that he ould find out of whom Jesus was speaking, as out to deliver Him up to the chief priests, he 'ls back, as the word means in English, on the oulder of Jesus, and whispers, " Lord, who is , "

At the guest-table of the Jews there were places honour, just as among us. There was the ghest and the lowest place on the couch ; and sus could not help noticing how much desire ere was among the visitors to secure the highest aces. He was breakfasting in the house of ore

of the chief Pharisees, and took occasion to remind him how much more blessed it was to give than to receive.

“Don’t imagine,” He seems to have said to His host, “that you are fulfilling the second great commandment of the law, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ by asking your friends and rich neighbours to a feast, because they are sure to ask you again, and so repayment will be made you; but remember the wise words of your own teachers, ‘Let thy house be open wide as a refuge, and let the poor be cordially received within thy walls;’ help the poor, and the maimed, and the blind—yea, help every one who is in trouble. True, they cannot repay thee, but thou shalt be repaid in the resurrection of the just. Thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee.”

These words would not be strange to the company, for some of the Jewish rabbis had taught the same truth over and over again. “Doing kind things,” one of them said, “is one of the pillars on which the world rests.” “Comfort those who need kind words,” said another, “and the good actions which you do in this world, will meet you again in the world to come.”

But in the days when Jesus was on earth the Pharisees had made sad work of this high and noble teaching; the words may have been remembered, but *the meaning* of them was clean forgotten. I

have before had to tell you how the Pharisees pretended to be the great defenders of the law of Moses, and what they were pleased to call the true religion ; how they courted attention to all they did, whether it were hospitality or charity, that "it might be seen of men," and how the Christ saw through their miserable hypocrisy, and called them whited sepulchres, clean to men's eye, but full of evil and sin. And so, in the house of this chief Pharisee, Jesus preaches His old sermon again,—

"Be merciful and give, hoping for nothing again, and ye shall be indeed the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He is kind unto the unthankful and the evil."

It was not, you see, so much with what a man did as with *why* he did it, that the pure and blessed One concerned Himself. And I am above all things anxious that you should bear this in your mind, because without doing so you will never properly understand the teaching of Jesus, or come to love and adore Him as you ought. He was not *a mere prophet*, as some of the greatest among mankind had been. He was not born into this world that He might teach you and me the great lesson to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly before God. Many a prophet had been sent in one country and another with this message, and some men had hearkened, but the greater number had



stopped their ears. The blessed One came with no lesson-book to mankind. "Light of the world," He for the first time flashed the sunshine of God's smile over the pages of the great lesson-book, which mankind had dimmed with their tears, and He showed what it meant. "Son of man," He shed tears of His own, and let men feel that He was a brother who suffered like themselves. "Son of God," He proved that He could conquer even death itself. "Image of the Father," He fulfilled His highest work; He showed God to man, and so drew man to God.

There was a guest at the table with Jesus, who was struck with what had been said, and not so much with that, I expect, as with *the way* in which it had been said, and the look which had gone with it. So he breaks into the conversation by saying, "Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." I suppose he was thinking of the words just used by the Teacher, "in the resurrection of the just;" for the Pharisees were warm believers in a life unseen, where the good would be rewarded and the evil suffer for their sin.

It was these words that gave our dear Lord occasion to speak this parable of The Great Supper, and which you can read in the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.

Do you yourself think the guests invited to that

supper were blessed? Would that all whom the good God calls to feast in His kingdom thought so too! But, alas! in the kingdom of heaven it is, as it was with a certain man who made a feast for many, and at the time when it was ready sent his servant, as customary, to say to them that were bidden, "Come, for all things are now ready."

Did they come, think you, all come, and willingly, with haste to the home of one who had been preparing so kindly for them?

No, indeed; they began to make excuses for not coming; they forgot the friendship of their host, good manners, promised word, and everything else: and why? Only because, for the moment, there was something which interested them more. Some of them, though, had shame enough to know that they were behaving badly. "I pray you," says one and another, "have me excused." But one of these guests who had been invited and accepted, cannot even be civil with his excuse. The servant calls at his house to say "Come, for all things are now ready," and finds him with his newly married wife. This is the curt answer to his host:—"I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

He did not give a moment's thought to the fact that he had promised to go, to the kindness of his friend in asking him, or to the empty place which his absence might prevent being filled. He did not trouble himself about the disappointment caused

his host, who had made all ready for receiving and honouring him. His one thought was for himself, and his own pleasure ; and his wife's face, in our picture, shows the satisfaction she felt in being powerful enough to make him break his word. A miserable victory, truly ! the power to make a man false, unkind, and ungracious.

Do you wonder that the master of the house was angry when his servant came home with these excuses, and this rude incivility ? You would say if such a thing happened to any one you knew, that he ought never to ask such people to his house again. The master of the house in the parable seems to have made up his mind in the same way ; but he would not suffer his feast to be wasted. He knew that in the streets and lanes of the city, and out in the fields and hedges beyond them, there were many who would gladly come to his table, and would never forget his kindness ; so the servant is bidden to seek out all who were in want, and, with the assurance that no matter how poor or wretched they would be welcome, to *compel* them to come in, that is—to overcome their natural reluctance, and fill the house wherein the feast was prepared and waiting.

Do you remember about the “kingdom of God ?” In the early chapters of this book, we talked a great deal about it, and, I think, satisfied ourselves that it was, as this guest of the chief Pharisee said,

"a blessed thing " to be in that kingdom. The speaker at the table was looking forward to some distant time when a kingdom of heaven should be set up here in this world, or in some other ; but we found that it was already set up, in our heart, in the country in which we live, and throughout the world. For the dear Christ Himself had come to be King of the hearts of men, and that is why we call Him the Christ, the anointed One, the royal One. "No doubt," said He to the multitude who thronged round Him, and saw His power over the evil tempers, and wild passionate natures of the afflicted : "no doubt, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you ;" and those who would fain have seen some wonders to prove that the kingdom had come, He rebuked with a warning not to be looking here or there for some fancied proof of it, because the kingdom was there amongst them, in their very midst. *Where He was, there was the King ;* where one poor sorrowing heart called, "O Son of David, have mercy on me!" there was a proof of the kingdom. It was the voice of a captive crying out to the Deliverer ; the cry of a slave for freedom.

You cannot, at any rate, forget that you are in this kingdom of heaven ; are a member of it ; signed with the mark of the King ; sworn to be true and loyal to Him. Has His voice ever spoken thus to you, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to

the poor ; and come, take up thy cross and follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; shalt be called to the great marriage supper, when the King and His whole family from earth will feast and joy through the many mansions of the house in heaven" ? Did the Christ ever stand before you and say, "He that will not say farewell to all that he hath cannot be My disciple" ?

"No," I hear you say, "Jesus never said that to me, but I have read words like these which He spoke to others."

Well, did any one ever say to you something of this sort, "Duty first, and pleasure afterwards" ? There were lessons to be done, but some one had begged you to go with them to the village, and the morning was so bright, and the thought of the shop windows was so pleasant. "Work first, and play afterwards," said your mother or your teacher, and very likely you did not know that it was the voice of Jesus which you heard, bidding you take up your cross and follow Him ; urging you to be true to the promise of your baptism, and to forsake your own pleasure that you might do His will ; that is, that you might faithfully do the work He had given you to do.

See how ready these invited guests were with excuses. One had purchased a piece of ground ; another had bought some oxen. These things were the toys of the moment, which filled all their

thoughts and left no room for remembrance of their promise, and for the kindness of their host.

If you can find no apology for the guests who were thus ill-mannered and ungrateful, what are we to say about ourselves, who have not only been called to feast hereafter in the kingdom of heaven but who have now here on earth, the true Bread from heaven, even the blessed Jesus, who can give life unto the world. When we might be with Him, feasting on His loving words and His promises of help, do we never say, "I pray Thee have me excused"? And is that the worst of it? Have we never said, "Oh, I am busy, I cannot come"?

"Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Yes, we are all ready to say that glibly enough, and we can enjoy singing hymns about the golden streets, and the heavenly feasting in the New Jerusalem.

"There is the throne of David ;  
And there, from care released,  
The shout of them that triumph,  
The song of them that feast."

Does it startle you to think, that perhaps at the very moment when we are singing that verse with voice in tune, and a face full of devoutness, the King, who looks not at the face, but through the heart, may *there* read this answer to His invitation, "I am singing hymns, and *therefore* I cannot come." Singing hymns is pleasant ; the services in

church may be enjoyable ; but doing the small, dull, everyday duties of life, ' the trivial round, the common task,' these are irksome, and if we can escape from them we will.

Oh, let me beg of you to get rid of the idea that this kingdom of God, in which you are invited to feast, is only in some far-off heaven of the future. It is here among you, in your very heart. You may feast and have joy with your King whensoever you will, but it will only be by listening to each message of His love, " Come, for all things are now ready." Whenever a temptation to seek your own way rather than God's will has been overcome ; whenever, for the love of the dear Saviour, some kind deed has been done ; whenever, in the strength of the Spirit of your Father, you have become a little, *no matter howsoever little*, like the Christ who died for you, then you may look for the invitation, " Come, for all things are now ready." Jesus Himself will be waiting for you, not only as the Host who invites, but as the feast itself. To be with Him, to draw closer to Him at the meal, to fall back, as the beloved disciple did, upon His shoulder and tell Him how you love Him,—all this is the reward of doing the right, of following duty instead of pleasure, and asking God to guide you step by step, to know and to do His will.

When such an invitation comes, you surely will not suffer any excuse to take the place of your

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heartly acceptance of it ; when Jesus calls, you cannot let business, or play, or pleasure, or anything else keep you from Him. Whether you do or not, depends on how much you know Him, how dearly you love Him. If He comes to be to you more than all the world beside, you will need no messenger from Him to say, "Come." When you understand and remember what He has done for you ; how He has made you heir, joint heir with Him in His Father's glory, and has prepared for you a place in those many mansions of which you often sing, you will not, I think, let trifles of earth come between you and Him ; and by-and-by, when you feel more of His love, and His own voice whispers "Come," you will be able to say from your heart, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none other upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE UNJUST STEWARD.

THERE is doubt as to where Jesus was when He told the parable about The Unjust Steward, but it was in the course of His journey ; for although St. Luke says it was spoken to the disciples, he mentions afterwards that the Pharisees had overheard it, and had their usual sneer ready for the Teacher.

The steward of some rich man had been cheating him, and had been found out, as cheats are pretty sure to be, sooner or later. He was to be turned out of his place, and the question with him was, what was he to do. He was not able to dig, and he was ashamed to beg, but he had plenty of cunning. He thought to himself, "Now, if I can make friends of the people who are in debt to my master, they will be sure to do me a good turn when I lose my place."

So he called the tenants of his master together, and asked, "How much rent do you owe?" It was the custom to pay rent then, as it is now, in

some countries, by giving a portion of the crops instead of money ; so the first man answered, "A hundred measures of oil ;" a second said, "A hundred quarters of wheat." "Well," said the steward, "I shall not have another chance of serving you, so I will let you off half of what you owe ; here is the paper, sit down and make out your account for fifty measures of oil, or eighty quarters of wheat."

In this way he cheated his master once more, but he managed to get the debtors on his side, who can hardly have helped knowing that he was cheating ; and if so, they were a party to the cheating, no doubt, and would feel all the more bound to him, lest he might get them into trouble afterwards.

That they did help him, is certain, if not out of friendship, at least for fear of being found out themselves ; for after the steward had met his deserts, and been turned out of his place, the master, who had very likely heard all the truth of the business, or at any rate had a suspicion of it, was telling a friend about it, and called his steward a clever rascal, or something of that kind.

And the dear Lord, ever ready to make a common thing the means of teaching a lesson, tells of what had happened, and what I think was very likely known to some of those around Him. A sad pity indeed that such a thing should be, as I

say, a common occurrence, but there are cheats to be met with in all countries and times. Men get so in love with money, or power, or something else which they think will bring them happiness, that they lie or deceive for the sake of securing it. Remember the warning of another parable, "Beware of all covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

This poor miserable steward had been covetous ; he had cheated for the sake of getting a little more money ; having been found out, he had cheated again, hoping to get the debtors into his power, or at least to make sure that he would force something out of them when he wanted. The steward had put but one thing before him—success,—and he had gained it by planning, plotting, scheming, and contriving. He was turned out of his situation, but he meant to be none the worse off.

So it came about, that his late master could say of him, in speaking to a friend, "That steward of mine was a precious rogue ; he knew he was found out, and there was no chance of my keeping him, but he managed to make a good thing even out of my sending him away."

With this story freshly before His hearers, our Lord teaches a lesson to His disciples and to us.

"And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends out of all the treasure you have in this life. Is it

money ? give it freely to those who need it for My sake, and you shall have treasure in heaven, which fades not away ; for there neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thief break through and steal. Money may be the greatest curse on earth ; often is so, because it tempts more men than does anything else, to lose their own life if only they can think to gain the whole world. But you may make a friend of each farthing you possess, of all the opportunities for doing good which money or talent or opportunity offers you, and when life in this world comes to an end, and all these things fail you, you shall in no wise lose your reward. In the everlasting habitations in which I go to prepare a place for you, even a cup of cold water given to another in My name, a single kindly word spoken, a solitary gracious action done for the love of Me, shall be rewarded a hundred-fold.

“But if you are not honest and true in dealing with such things as your money, and opportunities of spending it, which, mind you, are not yours, but your Father’s in heaven ; if, like an unjust steward, your only thought is, how much enjoyment you can get for yourself out of your money, such a poor thing as that, who will entrust to your keeping the true riches ? Can you expect that your Father will trust you with His hid treasure, the priceless pearl of His love ? If for the things which have been *lent* you in this life, you have no care,

except so far as they can be made to increase your own comfort, is it possible that your Father in heaven will give you that which out of His free love and bounty might be your own ; even His unspeakable love ? There is a choice which you must make yourself—either serve and worship God, to whom belongs all that you call your own in this life, and devote your money, your time, your opportunities to Him, so that another day you may be able to show Him what you have done with all which He left in your hands ; or else fall down and worship these very things—money, power, whatever it may be ; but don't make pretence to serve both God and mammon—that is, worldly prosperity,—because you cannot.”

You cannot serve two masters, however hard you were to try. Perhaps you do try sometimes. When there are lessons to be done, work to be got through, your thoughts go wandering to your play, and what is the end of it ? You know the work is badly done ; marks are lost, and displeasure is sure to follow. It is the same at play ; if you do not care about the game, if you are wishing yourself somewhere else, you may be certain you will make one miss after another and be called hard names by those on your own side. Just as surely as you cannot look in two opposite directions at once, so surely you cannot give your heart to two different masters, be they work and play, or, as in this

parable, the fading riches of this world and the treasure which lasts for ever in the world in which we shall all be very soon.

In the story of The Rich Fool, you saw how mad a thing it would be to choose money, got by hook or by crook, as the one object upon which to set your heart, and I am taking it for granted that you are going to act upon your honour ; you have promised to love and serve God above all, and by His blessed help you will.

But don't despise the lesson that this cheating steward can teach you ; rascal as he was, there is something in which you are bidden to imitate him by the Great Teacher. Out of everything which you have in this life, *make friends*, and then, one day, when you enter the everlasting home, which God your Father is preparing for you, more friends will crowd around, even than you knew of, and you will find that you are already well loved in the world of sunshine. For every penny you have denied yourself and given to some brother or sister of Jesus ; for each act of love you have done ; ay, for each bright look with which you have cheered the sad and sorrowful, a hundredfold shall be poured into your lap.

Mind you, there is the word of the True One Himself for it, that nothing done for Him shall lose its reward ; and He would not have told you this, if He had been afraid it would make you selfish,

and willing to do a kindness for no other reason than that you might find a reward another day. This thought, indeed, urged the steward to show so much cheating generosity to his lord's debtors; he did his utmost with his money, *in order to get more money.*

You, if you love your dear Father in heaven, will make the most of all you have in His service, no more thinking of the reward which is coming, than you do when you hasten to render some little service to a friend you love on earth.

Still, there is no reason why you should not be cheered and encouraged by the words of Jesus. The time will come—no one can say how soon—when, like this steward, you will be asked for an account of your stewardship. I don't mean that when you come to heaven, you will be put through a string of questions. When we use language of this sort, speaking about the great white throne, and the books being opened, and so on, *we are using the language of parable*, trying to describe heaven in everyday language.

Depend on it, giving an account will be something very different to answering questions as you might do in class. There will be no need of questions at all; for if you have been growing like to your Elder Brother, you will be known at once as His very own, and your place in the everlasting home will be ready.

Oh, that you may be a wise steward ; one determined to be just and true with all that your Lord has given into your keeping ; using your money and whatever you possess, so that hereafter you may find it has become friends to welcome you in the streets of the city of God and beside the rivers of the water of life.

Listen to what a writer of another country and faith than our own, says about this wise stewardship ; how friends may be made of our actions in this world :—

“ I saw one sunny dawn in paradise, walking among the pleasant trees, a soul who had but just departed from earth ; and there met him a girl of surpassing beauty, whose form and face were of heaven.

“ The soul from earth asked her, ‘ Who art thou, than whom none so lovely was ever seen by me in the land of earth ? ’

“ The maiden answered, ‘ O youth, I *am thy good actions.*’

Let me tell you one more story.

In a great land, long ago, lived a wealthy man who had a slave, to whom he had become much attached, and to whom he determined to grant freedom. This done, he made the freedman a present of a ship, filled with merchandise of great value, and sent him on a voyage, telling him that all was his own, to do with as he desired.



Away sailed the man, with his heart as free as his hands, the sense of being his own master giving him an enjoyment in all the beauty of ocean and of sky. He watched the sea of sunset glory mix, as it seemed to do, with the blue of the water, and the sun shoot up like a ball of fire from out of the morning horizon. All went well for some weeks, but presently bad weather set in. It was a hard time for the sailors ; waves swept over the deck, drenching every one, and putting out fire and light and all means of getting warmth and comfort. Day after day the storm seemed to increase in fury, and the captain made out that the ship was in the neighbourhood of land. Presently it was seen, but of what use was it to the vessel ? for the cliffs were high and perpendicular ; rocks jutted out into the sea, and the only safety for the ship was to keep away, if possible, from the land.

But it was not to be ; the wind tore the sails into shreds, and the vessel drifted nearer and nearer, till a great crash and a shiver of every plank from one end of the deck to the other told that the ship was among the breakers and escape hopeless. Presently a rent was made in her sides by another crash against the rock, and the water poured into the vessel, so that the only hope of life for the crew lay in jumping into the sea and swimming ashore. The chance was a poor one,

but all risked it. Cruelly were they beaten about by the waves and dashed against the sharp rocks. But by-and-by the freedman reached the shore, only to watch his treasured ship, and all the riches which were in her, being broken up and carried out to sea by the tide, or sucked down into the deep waters.

Not another of the crew ever reached land, and the unfortunate man who, a few days ago, had fancied himself possessed of all that could make him happy, stood there friendless and alone.

When at length the first burst of sorrow was spent, and he saw that it was hopeless to expect the safety of any of his companions, he examined the coast, and found a steep path through the hills, by which he reached an open country, where he wandered long, all but in despair, till, to his astonishment, he found himself in sight of a magnificent city.

But how much greater was his surprise when a procession came forth and greeted him with shouts and cries of "God save the king! Long live the king!" Before he could make the people listen to his story, he was carried in state to the palace; royal robes were put upon him, and a crown of the richest jewels was placed on his head, while those in the palace bowed low before him, asking his will and promising obedience to his commands.

That a slave should become a monarch was so extraordinary, that the man could not believe but that he was dreaming, but when there could no longer be any doubt, he asked how it was that the people had chosen one just escaped from shipwreck, and of whom they knew nothing, to be their king.

"Sire," was the reply, "the island on which you have been shipwrecked is inhabited by spirits. Year by year they pray the good God to send them some one from earth, to reign over them, and He hears their prayer. He has sent you ; but your reign lasts only for a twelvemonth. No king can reign longer here, and at the end of the time, his royal robe is stripped from him, all his state and grandeur is taken away, and he is sent, alone, to a desolate, uninhabited island, where he will find neither friend, nor home, nor any comfort, except what he may have himself provided."

The thought of so soon losing all that he had, and being sent away as he had come, shipwrecked, as it were, once more, with no one but himself for company, made the new king, who was a wise and determined man, bethink himself how he could best make sure that the country to which he was to be banished, should become a place where he might live happily.

He could not leave his own kingdom, because *there were* duties to be done there every day, but

he sent workmen and peasants to build houses and till the land. From the sums in the royal treasury, which were there for his own use, he devoted every farthing possible to the purchase of plants, flowers, and fruits, which were taken across. Sheep and cattle, and all that could make the desert island a habitation to attract people, were sent over, and not a minute was lost by the king in making plans and carrying them out for the improvement of the place, in which his home was to be, when the year came to an end.

Come to an end it did at the appointed hour. The king was deprived of everything which had been lavished upon him. In the poor, soiled dress in which he had landed, he was led down to the beach, and placed in the ship which was to carry him to the uninhabited island.

As he came on shore, what was his surprise to find a welcome even more hearty than he had enjoyed when he was shipwrecked. The people whom he had sent before him received him with delight. Everywhere beautiful gardens had sprung up, and the fields were yellow to harvest. A stately home had been built for him ; and there, among the people who loved him, and amid the fair scene which his prudence and forethought and determination had made secure, he lived happily.

Need I explain to you the story ?

Do you not see that the man had made friends

of the mammon of unrighteousness? It had failed, come to an end; but the friends remained, and they were ready to receive him into the habitation to which he came.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

THERE is more of a picture about this story than we have been accustomed to ; or, at least, it is a picture which is not so familiar to us as others in "The King's Story Book." In many of the picture parables which we have been looking over, the scene was very much the same as we meet with in England—waving corn, and fishermen with their nets ; seed growing in the garden, or sheep wandering from their fold. All these things, which are what are called the *drapery* of the parables, the dress, as it were, in which the lesson to be taught is wrapped up, these were like old friends the moment you saw them. But we come now to an Eastern picture, Eastern from beginning to end ; so, before we look for the lesson to be learnt from it, let us study the picture carefully. Thank God, we don't see poor sick men lying at rich men's gates ; and we never think, or at least we have no business to think, of one man in the unseen world

lying in the bosom of Abraham, and another crying to him for water to cool his tongue.

Yet we shall find that there is the usual simplicity of Jesus beneath what is strange to us at first, and that a valuable lesson may be taught us, even before we know it, by looking at this parable. Depend upon it, we shall not be left in doubt as to what it means. Jesus did not speak to confuse or bewilder us. The children's sermons are plain, and not easily forgotten.

If you ask me why it is that we do not see such poor wretches as Lazarus lying about in our streets, I think the answer, and a perfectly true one, is—because the kingdom of God has been set up in England, and not merely in England, but in the world. You have not forgotten, I dare say, that the kingdom of God, or kingdom of heaven, is another name for the family of God on earth. To be one in this family, then, should mean, that all men living, are our brothers and sisters. There can be no one living who is not, like yourself, a member of the same family. There can be no foreigners in it: all are citizens of the same country; heirs of the same everlasting inheritance; travellers, every one of them, towards the same fatherland; seekers for a city whose builder and maker is God.

What keeps a family together? Is it not the love which exists between the members of it, and *the obedience* to and trust in the parents of the

family. So it was that He who loved us as man never could love, gave one never-changing proof of our being followers of Him ; and it was this—that we love one another. “As I have loved you,” this was what He said, “love ye one another.” His love led Him to give up His life for His brothers and sisters ; I do not mean, merely to die upon the cross ; His hanging there was only one great act of His life,—He spent three and thirty years in this world of sorrow for you and me, gave up His own will, His own pleasure, His own time, for no other reason than that He loved us.

In some poor way—a very poor way, I admit—but still in perhaps as good a way as children generally work out the lessons given them, Christian men and Christian nations have for 1800 years been trying to do as Jesus did. They have been learning to help those who needed help, *because* these were members of the same family as themselves, joint heirs with Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

There are three ways in which you may treat people who are in distress, and want your help. You may turn away your eyes from them altogether, and forget them, because the sight or the remembrance of suffering is unpleasant to you ; or, you may feel so “upset,” as people call it, with the sight of suffering, that you may gladly give money to somebody else if they will undertake to



keep the suffering out of your sight ; or, lastly, you may feel that you have no more right to turn away your face from trouble and suffering outside your own home, than you have to shut your ear to a cry of distress from the loved ones inside it. It is humanity that is in trouble in either case, and for the sake of common interests you must help.

Now these three ways of dealing with our brethren, are—don't be surprised at what I say—just three steps of selfishness, each step higher than the other it is true, but all, as you will agree with me by-and-by, very different to what Christ meant, when He said, that *as He had loved us* we should love one another. In the first case it is plain enough that it is selfishness, and nothing else, which makes us forget all about our neighbours ; and it is pretty nearly as plain that paying something to get rid of him is only a step in selfishness.

What about the third way ? It is rather a fashionable one just now. You will hear a great deal about our being members of the great family of mankind, and its being our duty to help one another for the good of the whole family. But, of course, if you help the family of which you are a member, you help yourself in a sort of way ; at any rate, if you don't help yourself at the moment, you get satisfaction out of the help you give or the effort you make. A cat can do as much.

*Listen to a true story :—*

The rain was pouring, and the wind blowing, when a sleek, well-fed puss, sitting in the area-kitchen of a London house, pricked up her ears. She was very cosy, curled up on the mat before the fire, which was burning brightly, and had made her hair so warm, that you would have drawn back your hand if you had touched but the end of her whiskers.

Nobody spoke to her, yet she pricked up her ears.

There was a whining, pitiful mew in the area ; and as it came again and again, the warm cat grew more and more restless. Presently she started up, and, climbing the back of a chair, looked at a stranger cat, trembling in the gaslight outside. With this drenched visitor was a tiny little mite of a thing, trying to keep itself out of the rain and cold by nestling under its mother, who was looking mournfully up to the window from which the light was shining.

The house cat strained her neck and started each time that the mew was repeated, till at last she ran off to the back kitchen where a maid was standing, and began to whine and rub herself against the servant's dress. Having gained attention, she led the way to the area-door, and, as soon as ever it had been opened she darted out ; but in a moment her voice was heard again, and the maid, not very well pleased, came back to let her in.

What was her surprise when in came the house cat with a drenched kitten in her mouth, followed by the damp and draggled mother of this chit. The servant's curiosity was so excited, that she let the procession have its way. The house cat was before the fire directly, putting the young thing in front of her, and licking it from head to tail according to her usual way of showing affection. Meantime, the mother stretched herself with thanks to her hostess for the kind invitation, and was very soon warm and comfortable.

There is a great deal of this pussycat kindness in the world, and a happy thing it is so, thanks be to the good God for it. In the parable about the Leaven, we made out how good a thing this animal nature of ours was, *so long as it was servant and not master*; and the world indeed would be unendurable if the Maker of it had not willed, that kindness and good nature among animals should be the general rule and not the exception.

But what I want to get well into your minds is this—that the kindness and good will which you and I may show to each other, as *animals*, is as different as possible from the love which our King bid us give to one another as children of His Father, and as members, subjects, of His kingdom.

We are to be kind to every one, even to the unthankful and the evil, *because* our Father in *heaven is so*. We are to love one another, *because*

He, our Elder Brother, loved us and gave Himself for us. It is for love of Him, in the hope of being like Him, that the best children of His Father and ours are kind and loving.

You may show kindness to some one in trouble, *because* he is one of the human family and you feel bound to do something for him ; but, if you love Jesus above all, and are one of the very best children of your Father, your thought will not be so much about the human family *as the family of God*. To whomsoever you show kindness, it will be as if you were showing it *to the blessed Jesus Himself* ; all are His brethren and sisters, and He has told you, that whatever you do for them, for His sake, you do to *Him*.

A lady had an elder brother in India, where he had fought many a time for his Queen and country, and gained the reward which brave men get. He had been the favourite at home, the head of everything when the father of the house had been called away, and while at home was the ever-welcome comer in his sister's house, whose little children loved him only next to their father.

But the day came when his work in this life was ended ; ended as he himself always prayed God it might be, with his face to the enemy, and the arms of the men who worshipped him, and who would follow him everywhere, ready to receive him.

His young wife had gone before him to our Father's home ; but there was a little girl left, who was soon on her way to the sister's house in England, which had at once been made hers.

I can remember the welcome given her, for was she not Uncle Wilfred's child ? She was wayward and inclined to be tyrannical, as children so often are who have been brought up by Indian servants, but no ill temper of hers ever altered the deep love shown her ; and little by little the same gentle look that had been her father's and the same merry ways came over the child. The love shown her *for the sake of another* softened her whole nature, and she grew up to be worthy of it.

*For the sake of another*,—for the sake of your Elder Brother who has gone before you to the everlasting home, where all the victors are gathering for the last great triumph,—for His sake, then ; by the remembrance of all His love and goodness ; by the thought of His life laid down for you, love all men—ay, even your enemies,—and your reward shall be great, great above all measure, for you shall be called the children of the Highest, who is kind unto the unthankful and the evil.

Now to go back to the "Rich Man." He had lived a life of jovial merriment, as the language means ; he had possessed every luxury and denied himself nothing ; but he was far, very far from the kingdom of God. One perpetual round of pleasure,

one continual thought of how he could make himself happy—such was his life. As for the poor wretch who laid at the gate, he did not give him a thought ; if he saw him, he would no doubt turn away his head in disgust ; if you had told him that this was his brother, he would have said you were mad. I don't suppose he knew how the beggar lived, or when he died. It was no business of his, he would say. His life of pleasure was not to be broken into by any sick beggar.

But the two men came once more in sight of each other. It was in the world beyond the grave ; the unseen world—*Hades*, as the Greeks called it. And there, the condition of both turns out to be the exact reverse of what it had been here.

Both had been stewards of the Great King ; both had had some work given them to do. The opportunities of the rich man must have been great ; but the money lent him had been wasted on himself. Like the rich fool, he had kept his treasure in this world, and when he came into the other there was simply nothing for him. He had lived just like a brute beast that perishes. He had had but one thought, how most 'to indulge and pamper his animal nature ; the Divine nature in him, which came of the breath of God, he had crushed and despised : and now he finds this cherished love of his, the earthly body, has been left in the grave, and he has no one with him except his very real self,

the self that he never knew, never even thought of, in the life of earth, and his own very presence is torment to him. Then he sees the poor man resting in the bosom of Abraham, which was the Jewish way of saying "resting in peace," or "in heaven;" just as we, in our hymns, sing about the golden streets and the sea of glass, trying in that way to draw a picture of the blessedness of being in the presence of God, and with the company of the faithful, in the unseen world.

He, the rich man, is represented as calling and begging that Lazarus may be sent to him, if only for a moment. Oh, that he might have some one with him but himself! It would be as a drop of water to a burning tongue. But no; *as men sow, so they reap*. If you plant nettles, do you expect to get lilies of the valley? If men sow for their flesh, their animal nature, of that same nature they will assuredly reap corruption; and, if they sow for the spirit, *i.e.*, if they grow into the likeness of Christ, they will as certainly keep the everlasting life. Corruption and everlasting life are opposite things, and the one can have nothing to do with the other: and so it is you find the story goes on to point this out, by making Abraham say that between the rich man and Lazarus there is no way of coming together; the one is altogether out of reach of the other.

*It could not be otherwise; this great gulf which*

Abraham is made to speak of as between Dives and Lazarus, is only a way of saying in parable that the one man had chosen everlasting life, and the other had determined to undergo the second death. God Himself could not bring these two together ; He cannot make light darkness or darkness light. Each man had worked out his own salvation or his own destruction. Very little is told in the story about the earthly life of either one or the other ; the little glimpses given of them, let us see one living in pleasure and merriment, and his brother lying in sickness and misery.

Do not run away with the idea that it was because one was rich in this world and the other poor, that their condition was so different in the world unseen. Riches, indeed, as was taught us in the parable of The Rich Fool, may become, and do as a rule become, a temptation to a man, and because of this the Teacher said, it is a hard thing for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God ; but a very poor man has great temptations too, and it is victory over temptation, no matter whether we are rich or poor, that keeps hold of everlasting life.

And mind you, this teaching of Jesus was not new. No Jew who went to the synagogue could complain, that he had never been taught these great truths. Well indeed might Abraham say, when Dives asked for Lazarus to be sent to his



father's house with a word of warning for his brethren, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." Listen a moment to what had been taught by them of old :—

"Beware when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and when thy silver and gold is multiplied, lest thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who giveth thee power to get wealth.

"Beware that there be not a wicked thought in thy heart, and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee.

"Those who trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the abundance of their riches, may bless their soul while they live, and be praised of men, because they do well to themselves ; but like sheep they shall be laid in the grave, and they shall go to the generation of their fathers, who shall never see light ; for though they have been placed in honour, they abide not therein, but are like the beasts that perish.

"If thy heart be turned away from the Lord thy God, and thou worship other Gods, I testify to you that ye shall surely perish. Behold, there is set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life."

I might give you a chapter full of such teaching as this, from "Moses and the prophets." Dives

knew it all, or at least ought to have known it ; and (as Abraham is represented as saying) if any one from the unseen world had gone with the old message to the house of Dives, there would be no more attention paid to the messenger than had been paid to Moses and the prophets.

It was a favourite taunt of the Pharisees against Jesus, that He would not show them some wonderful sign or work, to the end, as they said, that they might believe on Him. But He who read their hearts, and the hearts of all men, knew well enough, that seeing wonderful sights could never make men love goodness, and aim at being perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. So that this answer put into the mouth of Abraham is but an echo of the dear Lord's sigh, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye *will not* believe."

As for the poor man Lazarus, there were sayings in the law and the prophets about such as he. He may perchance have joined in some of the temple services at one time, or from outside the gates have heard the choir of white-robed priests chanting the grand songs of his ancestors :—

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his trouble.

"The poor shall not always be forgotten, the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever.

"I will cry unto God most High, and He will send from heaven and save me."

Of the history of Lazarus we know, as I have said, next to nothing ; but as he is pictured to us in the other world, he recalls one of the sayings of the great Teacher, "Blessed are ye that mourn now, for ye shall be comforted ;" while Dives, in his misery, we can almost hear repeating the words which, according to this Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus had been using just before He told the parable, "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."

Now will you read over again the whole of this story in the sixteenth chapter of St. Luke, from the nineteenth verse, and remember that in this picture of the unseen world, Jesus *is giving us no account of His own*—for He never once did that ; but He is using the common language and belief of the people with whom He was talking, for the purpose of making the lesson easy for them ?

What is the lesson ?

May I not (with the deepest reverence for Him who loves the little children so dearly that, were He here now among them, He would speak in such plain and simple language as they could not fail to understand) sum up the teaching of this parable in the homely English proverb, "You cannot both have your cake and eat it" ?

For notice, to the rich man and to the poor, to you and to me, has the good Father of us all given *the gift of everlasting life* ; and this life is in His

Son. Riches and poverty need have nothing to do with our acceptance of Jesus as our King and our Saviour. Before each of us is put blessing and cursing, life and death, and the choice *is ours*.

By giving ourselves up entirely to the guidance of our animal nature, by letting riches and pleasure and selfishness become our life on earth, we separate ourselves from God, and thus destroy our everlasting life ; we indulge our mortal, changing, corruptible body at the expense of our godlike nature, our true selves, for whom Christ lived and died, and is now in heaven preparing everlasting habitations.

Or we may choose the better part which can never be taken away from us. We may use everything in this world as a help to become like our Father. If we are rich, you have seen how we may make friends out of the very mammon of unrighteousness, and when it comes to an end, look with certainty for a warm greeting beyond the shining river. And if we are poor, what matters it? We can love God and become like Jesus ; bearing our troubles and privations even as the dear Master, who sometimes did not know where to lay His head.

But *we cannot do two opposite things*. We cannot keep hold of everlasting life and throw it away at the same time. We cannot worship pleasure and God together. We cannot give the same care and

thought to our mere passing life on earth, and to the everlasting life in our Father's home.

Can you doubt as to which to choose?

Would you have a bon-bon that gives pleasure to your taste for a minute, or a grand book of pictures which will be as fresh ten years hence as to-day? Would you stand upon the shore and ask for some trumpery bit of rounded glass washed up there by the waves, rather than a fine museum of the most beautiful shells collected from all lands and beside many seas? Would you stoop down on the ground and say, "This common pebble shall be mine," rather than a monarch's jewelled crown?

And yet, if like the rich man in this story, you were to determine to have your good things only in this life, and let them tempt you to throw away the life unseen—the higher, the better life; the life in the King's court, in your Father's home,—you would be as mad as children who should choose something utterly worthless, rather than that which not all the money in this world can buy.





## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PRODIGAL SON.

THIS is the longest of all the King's stories, and I do not know what you may say, but for my part, I think it the second best to be loved of them. About the parable of The Lost Sheep—which, to me, is the most winning, and the most beautiful, short as it is,—and this one of The Prodigal Son, you will find, as we go along, that there is something alike. There is the great fact, upon which rests every hope we have in this world or any other—that the loving, ever gracious and good Father of us all in heaven seeks for us when we have gone astray from our path homeward to the fatherland, and will never cease to send seeking for us. “He that seeketh findeth.”

The word *prodigal* does not, in many cases where it is used, mean anything blameworthy. We speak sometimes of Nature being prodigal with her gifts, meaning that the earth brings forth so much of beauty, is so lavish with it, gives us



such an over-abundance as it seems. What shall be said of the little handful of seed, which will make your garden one mass of brilliant colour next summer; or of the piles of exquisite seaweed, which you find cast up upon the shore? We talk, too, of people being prodigal with their hospitality or their gifts, as if they could never show enough kindness to their friends and neighbours.

But there is a common proverb. "Be just before you are generous," and men, although very kind-hearted, may forget the lesson taught in this saying. It gives them more satisfaction to get a name for giving freely in a public way, than to use the money which God has lent them, in a quieter manner in which it will not be so much heard of, but in which they are clearly bound to use it. There may be a poor kinsman or neighbour to whom a handsome gift of money, accompanied with kind advice and a helping hand, would make all the difference—as far as this world is concerned—between misery and comfort; a sum which would fairly start him on the road to earn a livelihood for himself and those dependent on him. But there is some excitement going on in the neighbourhood—a church is to be built, or a chapel, or a school, or a museum, and the rich man puts his name down for £100 or £1000, and then sends off to his poor *kinsman* a box of cast-off clothing, with £5 and a

short note to say he is sorry that he cannot send more.

That man has been *generous before he was just*. I don't mean to say that he gives the large sum only for the sake of its being talked about, but there is an *éclat* about the one gift which there is not about the other, and he gets pleasure from it in consequence.

It is partly through such doings as these, that the word *prodigal* has come in some cases to have a bad meaning, and here it means one who squanders what he has, who throws it away, who wastes it on himself and his own pleasures, never thinking of a day when it will all be gone.

That is just what this poor boy did in the parable. I will not spoil the perfect and beautiful picture with any touches of my own. You can look at it and study all the details, which are so filled in that there is nothing to be desired ; and the more you look at and study it, the more you will learn. It is well worth knowing by heart, for, believe me, there may come a time in your life, when its being a real and true story to you, may save you from darkness and sorrow. Let it be another of those pictures hung up in your heart, that, by long looking at, becomes gradually familiar—as familiar as your dearest friend ; and then, if a day should ever come, when your own folly has led you far away from the fatherland, the face of this poor

boy will seem as if it were your very own, and by God's good grace, his words will rise to your lips—

“I will arise and go to my Father.”

This boy was only such as many another one before him and since. His home was a happy one, his father loved him equally with his elder brother; but there was a certain amount of restraint at home,—duties to be done, a regular daily course of work. The young fellow fretted over it. He saw, perhaps, others of his own age who were freer than he; he heard tell of the enjoyment and excitement of travel. He thought it would be a grand thing to be his own master, by which he meant—to do just whatever he pleased.

The thought never passed through his mind, that the father who had loved him so well would sorely miss him; that his elder brother would be left to bear the burden of the work alone. Himself and his own pleasure were all in all.

Well, home has been left behind, and, as far as one can judge, all recollection of it too, for directly he reaches a foreign country, he is found spending his money prodigally, recklessly, on himself; amid riotous living, with companions who, no doubt, attracted by his hospitality, as they called it, style themselves his friends, and help him to fool away all that his father has given him. It goes very quickly, for these friends of his are never tired of *helping him* to spend it; they will (so they assure

him) never forget his kindness ; will always have a welcome for him ; always stand by him. He is a capital fellow (they tell him), open-hearted, generous, and such good company.

Little by little, the man's money disappears; and as it goes, these so-called friends disappear too. For they were the friends *of his gold*, not of him. There is no longer feasting and riotous mirth in his home, and it is that which drew them to him. To them he was nothing more than a mine, from which they digged so much gold; or some luscious fruit, with which they satisfied a greedy appetite. When the mine was worked out, they never gave the place another thought ; when the delicious mouthful was finished, they threw away the stone.

The poor fellow's last penny is gone ; he is sick and wretched. Do you think these friends stand by him, or even come to see him ? Not one of them. They keep out of his way ; and if they should meet him in the street, would pass by on the other side. Friends, forsooth ! why, they are not as good friends as the cat of whom I told you ; they are hardly worth calling men. They are only low-bred animals, with no thought, save for themselves.

Yet it is for such as these, that the lad has exchanged all the blessedness of home and a father's love. At home, there were friends who would have been true to him till death ; servants who were

loyal and faithful, and would cheerfully have done his bidding ; duties which, had they been heartily attended to, must have rewarded him a hundred-fold, even in this world : and now, what has he in exchange for them ? Not even a place in which to rest his head ; not even the company of the idle and dissolute crew, on whom he has squandered his father's gifts.

There is a lower depth for him yet—to look after the swine in a field near the city, where those friends of his are perhaps helping to ruin some other poor fool like himself. Why, the swine are better friends to him, than these gay companions ! They let him share their husks. So this is the end of his riotous living ; and I pray you to stop, and think of it. Here is the son of a rich man, a great man, better still, a good man,—herding with pigs. His claim upon his father has been thrown away ; his birthright has been sold ; his home has been spurned ; honour, family, wealth, position have been exchanged for what ? Why, that he may eat pigs' leavings, and huddle with them at night to keep himself warm.

While he was doing so, "he came to himself."

Don't go on with this story, till you see the immense meaning of those four words.

How often have we found the Great Teacher trying to make us understand the difference *between our lower and our true nature—the higher,*

Divine nature which is our very self, and which is from the breath of God.

The boy had been living like one of the beasts that perish, but he could not kill the Divine nature ; he could not destroy himself. He had suffered his slave to become his tyrant ; had listened to all its promptings, followed all its commands ; and it had led him to its natural companions—the beasts that perish.

But in the midst of his utter wretchedness, his hopeless misery, *he comes to himself*, and his first recollections are of the home he has lost and the father's love which he has thrown away.

My darlings, be yourselves, your true selves. Be true to your birthright. Live as children of your Father, heirs of the glory which is as yet unseen, and never suffer the tastes and passions of an animal to lead you into degradation and ruin. As you saw in the story of The Leaven, your mortal nature is not sinful in itself ; it may be of the greatest service in helping you do God's work in this passing world. But its will is, to please itself ; its pleasure is, to be pampered and live delicately ; and unless you keep complete mastery over it, *it will lead you, instead of being driven by you.*

But you have learnt that you cannot serve *two masters*. You will hold to the one, and despise the other. You have the words of Jesus for it, and you

will find out for yourself that these words, like every word He spoke, are truth.

Yet even if, in some sad hour, you were to find yourself the slave of your own slave—if little by little you had let the lower nature get the mastery over you, till you had turned your back on your Father's home and had no thought but for the pleasures of this life,—there would still be, as this parable shows, hope for you.

But in what way?

Here we open one of the most important pages in God's lesson-book. We looked at it once before in the story of the rich fool, where we saw how great and grand a thing, sorrow and suffering had proved, keeping alive, as it had done, in the hearts of men, unshaken faith in God's goodness and right-doing, and a certainty of the triumph of right-doing, or righteousness, over everything evil. And in this beautiful story we learn another great use of suffering, another work which it does for God and for us. It has happened countless times, that, *through suffering*, a man has "come to himself."

Picture to yourself this poor boy in his misery, and see if his very wretchedness did not turn out to be an angel of the Most High, calling him home again? If his money had not failed, if his health had not given way, he might have gone on living the life of a beast with his boon companions. But herein comes out plainly our Father's unspeakable

love, that while He has entrusted to us the management of this somewhat unruly servant, our animal nature, He has so planned that the very fact of our giving way to it, is *sure to bring us sorrow*, sooner or later. We shall *suffer if we sin*, and I would have you let those words stare for ever in your face, not to frighten you, but to prove to you the exceeding love of our Father and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

We suffer if we sin, for these two reasons. First, because our true selves are *holy*. We cannot shake off the King's nature ; we cannot forget altogether the home of our Father, and the throne and the royal diadem which He begs us to share with Him. Life, everlasting life, is what we lay claim to, even when we hardly know it. And so it is, that sin, which is a going away from our Father, separation from Him, losing our treasure,—though, it may be, at the time without being aware of it,—is certain to bring us pain, whenever we *come to ourselves*. We start up to find that we have been robbed of our treasure, and we go back, with hot tears falling on the ground, in search of it.

We suffer if we sin, for this other reason : because, in God's boundless love, He has made it a law, that over-indulgence of the lower nature brings misery and death with it. There is more sickness and pain caused by people over-eating and drinking themselves than you can have any idea of. Last year there were 13,000 persons sent



to madhouses ; and of these, between four and five thousand had *made themselves mad with drinking*. Why, the poor wretch eating the husks among the swine was happy compared with these ! For they have, for the time at any rate, put it out of their own power to learn the lesson which sin might have taught them.

Of all depths to which we can fall, there is none lower than this. To give such liberty to our animal nature, that not only are we its slaves, but that we positively throw away the power to struggle for freedom, this is indeed hopeless misery, from which may the dear God in His love deliver us.

Happily such sad cases are the exception. Many there are, who, like the boy in the story, have been called home, by the very sorrow and suffering which the indulgence of their lower nature caused them. They have been *driven* home.

Not a very nice way, you say. Perhaps not, but better than being cast out from home for ever, is it not ? Better, far better, to be led by the dear One, with His winning voice before us and His loving arm around us ; but oh, blessed still to be driven back to Him, when we will not listen ! welcome pain, sorrow, and humiliation, when they come as angels from God's throne to us amid the sin and shame which our absence from home has brought us, and whisper in our ear the startling words—

“ I will arise and go to my Father.”

“ ‘*They* whisper,’ ” do you say ? “ Why, it was the boy who did that ! ”

Have you forgotten that our love to God is but the *echo* of His love to us ?

The prodigal was alone with his bitter grief ; he had gone back in thought to the fatherland and the home where happy days had been spent. All rose fresh in his memory. The hired servants, with their ample meals ; the birds around the house fed and cared for ;—and he perishing with hunger !

“ I will arise and go to my father.”

Who spoke ?

You say, “ The boy.”

But Jesus says, “ It was not He that spake, but the Spirit of His Father that spake in Him.”

Yes, the Shepherd was seeking the lost sheep, and His voice sounded through the far distance. The angels of God, with strange names as it may seem to you, Hunger, Poverty, Sorrow,—may I add without your misunderstanding me — *Sin*, were beside the wanderer, with their fingers pointing homeward.

And he caught the words from their lips. *He had come to himself.* His heart was turned. He had repented ; and with the power of a new life, he arose from among the beasts surrounding him, with words of bold determination and hopefulness :—

"I will arise and go to my father."

How he came from that far country we know not. It must have been with sore difficulty, and much hardship, for he had no money, and but the poor clothes of a swineherd. Angels of God went with him on his way, you may be sure. Hunger and Poverty, unpleasant guides as you may think them, were before him and behind, and brought him safely to his father's home.

Strange guides—and not beautiful to men's eyes, these ; and yet chosen messengers of our Father, to seek and to save that which is lost. If you had missed your way on a wild moorland, and night were coming on, would you not be thankful for the help of any one to put you in the right track? Even if he had a rough and unforbidding face, you would follow him rather than be left there in the cold night.

How thankful, then, to our Father we should be that He has placed such guides as these, on the wild wastes of sin, and amid the deep, long shadows of disobedience to His will ! But ah, how we should beg Him of His goodness that we may keep always within sound of His voice, lest we stray away from the path homeward, and need to be called back by such messengers as Pain and Suffering !

There was, as I told you, determination and hope in the boy's words, and so the next thing we *hear of him* is, that he arose and came ; but before

he could reach home, the one who had loved him from the first, who had never ceased to love him through all his sin and wilfulness, saw him, ay, a great way off, and ran to him, and embraced him.

Was there ever love like this? None, save in the heart of Him whom this father represents to us. His is the only heart that can love on, unchanged by the coldness and sin of His children; His is the love which is for ever stepping forth to meet the lost ones in a far country; His the love which draws them home, and with royal grace speaks the words of pardon, opening the prison doors and setting the captive free from his debt.

Can you ever be afraid of God, when Jesus tells you that, in the midst of your sin and folly, no matter how great, no matter how long and lasting, the moment that you will only make the resolve,—"I will arise and go to my Father,"—even before you can reach His feet, The Father will come to meet you; yes, run, hasten, lest you should fall fainting in the way, and *embrace* you.

If you can doubt Him, look at His own image, His own likeness, in the sweet Lord and Saviour. Did not He say that to do The Father's will was His meat and drink, His daily bread? And did not He show to us what that will was, by hastening to meet every one who was sinful and sad? Men blamed Him that He went among sinners, but He closed the mouths of His enemies by telling them that it

was just to sinners that He had been sent—to the lost sheep, to men and women who had wasted their substance in riotous living, who were feeding with the swine, and debasing themselves like the beasts. To all such, His gentle voice sounded, "Come unto Me," and they came; came, and found the way homeward to their Father's arms; came, because they at last knew something of the love of God which passeth knowledge.

This parable of The Prodigal Son, is a picture filled in, as we should say of a painting, with the very finest work. Each word gives increased beauty to it, as we listen.

For no sooner has the word been spoken, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," than the father calls to his servants to bring quickly the best robe and put it on the boy; to put a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet; and to find out the best calf of all in the field, that a feast might be prepared.

I beg you to pay attention to everything that this father is described as doing. Think over it, one act of his after another,—how he runs to meet the truant, anxious to spare him the difficulty and shame which he must have felt in facing the father whom he had wronged, and in entering the house which he had spurned and deserted. See *how one loving thought for the poor wanderer*

follows another: the best robe shall be for him, a ring and shoes; and then, not content with the joy of making the lad feel himself at home, the father calls together his neighbours and friends, that his lost one may be sure he fills the same old place, and has the same post of honour among those who knew him in the olden days.

When you have thought over all this, again and again, till you can see every single act being done before you; see the glad look of the servants' faces as they hasten to set the feast; hear the merriment of the assembled guests as they join in congratulating the father on the prodigal's return;—then learn this:—

That this picture cannot make you understand one ten-thousandth part of the love and sweetness of our Father in heaven, to every one of us His children, who comes home to Him after wandering amid forgetfulness and sin. And learn this moreover—that whenever you shed tears over the past; when you sorrow for having done wrong; when, calling to mind the unspeakable goodness of God, you come to yourself and say, even if with faint voice and only half determination, “I will arise and go to my Father,” there will be joy and merry-making in the presence of the angels of God.

Can you believe that? I could not, if the dear Lord Himself had not said it. What can it matter to those who bend low before the throne in heaven,

and sing the praise of the Most High, that you or I should go into our room, and having shut to the door, fall on our knees and be sorry because we have sinned? Why, as your tears fall hot on your hand, do their voices sing as if of victory? Why, as your stumbling words, "Father, I have sinned," come up to the Father's ear, do the whole host of heaven rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?

They shout because a victory has been won. The love of God has triumphed over you. The voice of Jesus has been calling, and you have listened. Is it nothing, think you, to make hosts of bright angels joyous; nothing to make the heart of the dear Father glad? Marvellous above all things on earth—*you* can do this!

One dare not say we could do without one of the stories in our King's Story Book, for each has its priceless lesson of help and comfort; but it seems to me, that if this one had not been told us, earth would have been a different place to what it is.

I have tried elsewhere to tell you "the story of our Father's love," but what are words of mine to this one parable, which sets it forth as it never was set forth in this world before or since? And that is why I say, learn it by heart; make it your own till this passing life is over, and on the threshold of yonder heavenly home, *His* Father, through whom *alone* you have known of the pardon and the love,

will Himself bring forth the best robe and put it on you, while all your dear ones from earth crowd round with a welcome to the many mansions.

You cannot fail, I think, to see how at every step we take, we come in sight of our Father's love; nor will you wonder that it is so, as little by little you understand it better. From out of it comes all we have — health and home, summer sun and shade, winter's cheeriness and merry-making. And from out of it, too, come those blessed teachers, Sorrow and Suffering, to be helpers of the Father's poor, wandering, erring children.

Let the love of God, then, be the one thing that you think of, above all others. You can never know one millionth part of its beauty and glory, for it is like an ocean over which a man might sail for ever without coming to the shore. It is like a land of mountain and valley, where the streams sparkle in the sunlight, and where the choicest fruits and flowers will be yours at every step you take.

All these things, though, are but poor pictures of what it is. Here we may look at them and fancy in some dim way what the reality must be; but when the country of God's love, the fatherland of heaven, the life as yet unseen, breaks upon us, in the passing away of this mortal body, then we shall look upon a sight so fair, that the recollection of these pictures we made for ourselves of blue



ocean, and happy valleys, and summer sunshine, will make us laugh in joyous merriment, to think how little we knew in this life, of the untold glory of the love of God.

There is a second chapter in the story of the prodigal, which teaches us something else about God's love.

The boy's elder brother comes home from his work while the feasting is going on, and when he learns that the truant is back again, and that all these preparations, all this merriment is for him, he is angry and will not go in.

Do you blame him for being angry? His father did not.

If he could forgive all the years of wicked disobedience of the younger son, do you think he could be hard upon the elder, who had been ever with him?

And yet this one was unreasonable, thoughtless; perhaps, what is much meaner, he was jealous. He speaks harshly of the younger brother, and seems to consider that his coming home is a robbery of that which belongs to him alone,—the first place in his father's thoughts. There has been no such merry-making on his account; his birthday was never kept with such festivity as has welcomed this ne'er-do-well.

But just as the father came out to meet the long lost one, so now he comes out once more to com-

fort and soothe the son who had been all in all to him these many years. "Son," he says, as he puts his arm around him, and they walk to and fro—"Son, *thou* art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. Thou art as myself; there is nothing which I hold back from thee. It is meet and right that *we*—you and I, for we are one,—that *we* should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found. I rejoice because he is thy brother as well as my son: will not thou be as I, and joy for my son as well as thy brother?"

There the story ends; but I am sure that no good heart, no good son, as the elder brother had proved himself, would withstand such love as that. He would go in and join in the feast, and so fill up, to overflowing, the cup of his father's happiness.

Can any more wonderful picture of God's love than this be imagined? It is marvellous enough, that He should call back to Himself the children who have spurned and deserted Him, that he should leave no stone unturned to rescue the wandering and the sinful, for no other reason than to prove His love to the poor erring ones of earth.

But here the King teaches us,—and we never could believe it if any one but He had taught so,—the almighty One suffers His faithful children positively to complain to Him about Himself! He

bears with fretfulness from them, and answers them, not as He might do, by saying that it is for Him to act as He will, but by gentle soothing words, showing them that what He has done, He has done *because it is right*.

Would you stay to argue with a wasp that had stung you? Would you stop to reason with a horse though good and faithful? Yet, He who dwelleth in the high and holy place, whose name is holy, the Creator of the ends of the earth, before whom the hosts of heaven veil their faces and bend in silent wonderment and adoration, He suffers His faithful children to complain !

Surely it can only be *because* they are His children, His very own ; because, as you will have seen over and over again, all parables about Him make Him known to us, not according to His boundless love, but according to our tiny power to understand that love.

We call Him Father because we have no dearer name. But if you could know the goodness of all the best fathers upon earth, if the thoughtfulness and tenderness of every mother who has ever lived were your own for ever, there would still be nothing in all such overwhelming affection, to make you understand the love of Him who bids us call Him our Father which art in heaven.

Remember this : if ever you are in trouble ; if *ever* wrong-doing should get a hold over you ; if

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ever temptation to do evil is overpowering you ;  
f ever you are downhearted, or in despair, come to  
yourself, and say—

“I will arise and go to my Father.”

## CHAPTER X.

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

IN the journeys to Jerusalem, Jesus, when, as usually was the case (probably with the view of avoiding the unfriendly country of the Samaritans), He came along the eastern side of the Jordan, would make Jericho His last stopping-place before walking on to the home at Bethany, on the hill-top, where the friends who so dearly loved Him were waiting with a welcome.

From Jericho, He would take six hours or more, in toiling up the steep range of hills that lay between the valley of the Jordan, and the heights which overlooked Jerusalem. A very bad name had this part of the journey; for the way was steep and rugged, the road but narrow, and the overhanging hills made a safe retreat for the robbers who infested it. They were tempted, no doubt, by the number of travellers who passed that way, for Jericho was a large and important city, and

between it and the capital there would be constant and busy traffic.

So bad had the doings of these robbers become, that, not long before our Lord's time, the Roman general had sent an armed force to conquer and disperse the bandits. But though dispersed for a while, they were not destroyed, and one of their pieces of cruelty, perhaps one of which the Teacher had just heard when He came to Jericho, is now made use of by Him to give us a great lesson, which this time we do not even need to look for in the parable, because it is plainly before us in the last words of Jesus to the lawyer.

Jericho was a lovely place. Herod had made it a store-house of the beautiful, and had been prodigal with money and labour to render it magnificent. Its situation, if nothing else, made it worthy of the care bestowed on it. In the blooming valley of the Jordan, which had been made indeed to blossom like the rose by the stream flowing through it, stood the city amid groves of palm-trees. A fountain of crystal clearness rose near it, and the plain around was richly cultivated.

Jericho, moreover, was famous because of what had happened there. It was there that Joshua made his first attack on the heathen nations who occupied Palestine, and it was near Jericho that the two great prophets Elijah and Elisha parted, to meet again only before the throne of the Almighty.

But to us, it is most memorable as being the scene of many an incident in the life of Jesus. It was but a day's journey hence, that He suffered His fierce temptation. Near the city, He gave sight to some blind men. Bartimeus heard His voice there, and asked for light and there was light, for the pitying Son of man and Son of David and Son of God had come to give sight to the blind. In Jericho it was, that Zaccheus fell under the spell of the Galilean Teacher, and came to himself, turned back, repented. So that the place and neighbourhood must have been very familiar to Jesus.

Well, on one of the journeys through Jericho to Jerusalem, a lawyer put a question to the great Teacher to try Him, or, as it is said, to tempt Him, for the word *tempt* very often means nothing more than *to try* or to test; and the lawyer, who had been listening to the teaching of Jesus, was anxious to see what He would bid him do to inherit everlasting life.

Jesus, as His manner so often was, tried the questioner, and instead of answering him, asked, "What is written in the law about it?" The lawyer was quite at home in this, and replied at once in words from the book of Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Rightly answered," said our dear Lord ; "do as the law bids you, and you will have what you seek—everlasting life."

You see He had made the man answer his own question.

The lawyer was a little disappointed, I fancy. He may have thought that the new Teacher would give new teaching, and was surprised to find Him going back to the old written law of the Jews. If he thought so, he could not have known very much about the Prophet of Galilee, for Jesus brought no *new* teaching, no law which was to do away with the old law. What He aimed at showing men was, the one only way in which they could keep this law ; in offering to them Himself, the very love of God, He sought to win for His Father their hearts' love, so that they might find themselves obeying the commandments, not because they were ordered to do so by the law, but because *they could not help obeying*, for the love of the dear Father in heaven.

Perhaps, too, the lawyer was a little vexed, a little put out, that the bystanders should see that his question had been so readily answered. And so, whether to put Jesus in a difficulty, I know not, he asked again—

"And who is my neighbour?"

It would have been very easy for Jesus to have said in reply, "You must treat every one as you



neighbour ;" and then probably a laugh of derision would have come from the lawyer, and a little hubbub arisen among the crowd—"What, a Publican my neighbour indeed!" "Those cursed Roman soldiers, are they my neighbours?" "Is my neighbour to be a Samaritan forsooth?" And in this way opposition, and maybe disturbance, would have been aroused.

You will not find that the Bringer of God's peace to men ever excited opposition on purpose. It came often enough, because His words went through the hearts of men who were too proud to own that He touched their sore point, too much set against the truth to listen quietly. But He gave no offence if it could be helped ; and see here with what skill the parable comes in, not only making the lesson plain to all, but forcing the lawyer to find it out for himself and for those who were listening to the conversation.

A traveller, coming down through the rocky defile or passage which leads to Jericho, is set on by banditti, who, not content with robbing him, and (very likely because he defended himself bravely) treating him brutally, take away his clothes and beat him, and then hurry off into the secure retreat which the hills afforded them. The man lay there half dead, helpless, and like to die, for there was no one to help.

*By-and-by* a priest on his way from Jerusalem

comes along. He, you may be sure, will help the poor man, for does he not teach the people the great commandments of the law? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself," are words often on his lips; so the unfortunate traveller is safe enough now.

The priest cannot help seeing the wounded man, for the road is too narrow to miss anything in it. *And he does see him.* He catches sight of the poor fellow lying there. He looks backward and forward uneasily, lest the robbers may be in waiting; and then, dig, dig, go the spurs into the sides of his beast, and away he gallops as hard as he can to Jericho, to tell them at home of his marvellous escape, and to curse the Roman soldiers for not making an end of the robbers.

He has taken very good care of his life, has that priest. Fancy what a sneer would sit on his face if, as he went through the streets of Jericho, he caught the words of the Galilean Teacher, "Who-soever loveth his life, will lose it."

The day wears on, and the wounded traveller is left with no shelter from the sun, no friendly voice to speak a word of comfort.

But at last there is help. Here comes a Levite, one of the lower priests who serve in the temple, but a man of importance and, no doubt, kindly heart.

Yes, he is bent on the rescue. He sees the man

lying there, and crossing over from the side where he is riding observes him carefully. Down he gets from his mule. What! Up again—round with the beast's head, and away down the rocky road to the plain, go Levite and mule. Perhaps if the mule had been alone it would have done more; it could have done *as much*, at any rate. It could have "come and looked."

The sun goes lower and the road is already in shadow. So far, it is well for the traveller who lies there—for his thirst will be less now that the heat is passed; but meantime his wounds are getting stiff and painful. If no one come soon, he must die. And even if a Priest or Levite should come, what a poor chance for him!

At last, here is some one, but depend on it, as the daylight is passing away, he will be in a hurry to get on. Besides, as he draws nearer, you may see he is a foreigner, and so of course he will not trouble himself about a half-killed Jew lying on the other side of the pass. It is more than unlikely that he will, for he is from Samaria and homeward bound. And "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," as the woman at Sychar once said to our Lord.

Why should a Samaritan have dealings with the Jews? Had there not been a deadly feud or quarrel between them for centuries? Did not the *Jews call their neighbours*, accursed; and had not

the Samaritans returned the ill feeling with every annoyance and hindrance that they could throw in the way of the Jews?

As this Samaritan traveller went by and saw the wounded man on the other side, he might well have said to himself, "There is one of that hated race killed, and one less pest in the world."

But he says nothing of the kind. He comes across the pass, gets down from his beast, and then, looking tenderly on this cruelly used Jew, he binds up his wounds and softens them with oil; gives him wine to restore his vigour, and sets him on his own beast.

What! Is he not afraid of the robbers? Does he not fear for himself?

My children, mark this—*he does not think anything about himself*. There is a man at his feet, wounded, sick, and ready to die, and he *thinks of him*. He has compassion on him.

In a terrible accident which occurred in a coal mine, a number of the men employed were killed, but there was a chance for some to escape to the mouth of the shaft and be drawn up. Those who were left alive were hurrying there, when they passed one of their comrades leaning over a boy who was either dead or nearly so. "Come," they shouted, "quick, we shall get up in time!" But the man, without raising his face from the boy, called back, "Nay, I will stay with the lad."

He stayed with the lad, and stayed too long to live. The death damp of the mine rolled up along its dark passages, folding him in its stifling cloud, and man and boy died together.

Together their bodies lay in that house of death, thousands of feet below the ground ; and together they themselves, in the Divine nature, in the image of God, stood at the same moment in the life unseen.

What words, do you think, may have been the first that fell upon the man's ears as the new scene opened on him and he felt himself born into a new world ? Perhaps they were these, the words of Him, the very life itself, through whom alone we have the everlasting life, " Whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same will save it."

To die for others is to die as Jesus died, and to find life with Him is to find life everlasting.

There are many brave hearts like that miner's in the world. I could tell you of an engineer of a steamer who, when the flames burst out in a vessel crowded with passengers, stood below driving his engines at racing speed, in hope of getting the ship to shore in time to allow of escape from the fire. He stood there and was positively roasted to death, but the passengers were saved. I might tell you of doctors, who met death in the very act of healing the sick ; of soldiers, who have thrown their own *bodies* before the form of some loved leader and

died for him ; of gentle women, who have given up their lives to redeem the sinful and the wretched, when Priest and Levite had come and looked on them and passed by on the other side.

These all are a band in God's noble army of martyrs, and I pray you stop and think of the great host of that army which has been mustering in past ages, and is now in the unseen world. Do they not bear this message with them,—the lesson which the good Samaritan also teaches us, and which he must have been taught in some way by the Spirit of our Father, "Take no anxious thought for your life?"

Why, but because this mortal life of ours is only like the cloud which flits across the morning sun, and very soon will have passed away? Why, but because there is something else to be anxious about—which is this,—to do the will of God, for whosoever doeth His will liveth and abideth for ever?

We left the wounded traveller in much better plight than when we first saw him ; and now, not content with what he has already done, the good Samaritan leads the beast gently down the pass to Jericho, and there bids the host of the inn take care of the wounded man, promising payment for all the trouble spent on him.

The crowd give a murmur of satisfaction with the ending of the story, and Jesus turns full upon the lawyer with another question.

"Which of the three," He asks, "Priest, Levite, or Samaritan, was *neighbour* to him that fell among thieves?"

Watch the face of the lawyer. He is too clever a man not to see where His questioning is leading him. He does not like to name even the hated Samaritan; but there is only one answer to give, and he gives it fairly enough.

"He that showed mercy on the man, was his neighbour," he says to Christ, who with a winning smile and look of kind encouragement, bids him "Go, and do in like manner" as the Samaritan.

I know not what followed that conversation between Jesus and the lawyer. Let us hope that in an honest and true heart he came into the kingdom of heaven.

What is going to come out of the dear Lord's talk with you?

He says, "Go, and do in like manner" as this good Samaritan. He recalls to your recollection the second great command in the kingdom of heaven, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and He shows you, in this parable, that your neighbour is any one who is thrown in your way and is in trouble. You are to love him as though he were yourself; to be as thoughtful for him as you would be for yourself; to be to him what this good Samaritan was to the wounded Jew,—a *helper*, a *guide*, a *friend*.

Who is it bids you do all this ?

Why, your King ; He whom you have promised to obey ; He whose sign is on your forehead, whose name you bear, under whose flag you fight.

Can you disobey ? Are you not upon your honour ? A good subject, and not obey the King ! a true soldier, and not follow your Captain ! That would not be like you.

And if you are beginning to understand what the kingdom of heaven really is, if this beautiful Story Book of the King is, little by little, opening to you the great secret, that love rules in this kingdom, and only love, then you will not need to wait for a *command* from your dear Master. It was needed for the lawyer, because he as yet was outside the kingdom. But you are in it ; members of it. And with you, the first thought will be, of an Elder Brother rather than of a King.

"As I have loved you, love ye one another," will be words that speak more loudly in your ears than the command, "Go, and do in like manner." For those who knew not their Lord it was necessary ; for you, surely, it will not be. You will not need to be bidden what to do ; how to show your love for Him, who loved you and gave His life for you.

On earth you do not ask your father to tell you how you are to prove your love to him ; or, if you



do, it is in some passionately loving way, which makes your love plain to him even while you are asking. And so, if you have learnt to love the dear God in heaven, if you have come to know this adorable gentle brother of yours, Jesus, so well, as you may do from this Story Book of His, I am sure that it will become in time natural for you to be kind and loving for His sake. As I have had to tell you before, it will not be natural to do so all at once. The voice of the tempter will whisper, "Pass by on the other side. Better not go near those sick people, or you may catch the infection; better not read these accounts of sorrow and misery, or it will make you miserable; better not listen to that story of grief, lest for very shame's sake, you feel bound to give away some of the money which might have been spent on yourself."

When you are conscious of these promptings, when you hear these whispers, do not hesitate to use the words of the triumphant Saviour in the desert, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

As children, you will not be called on to attend sick persons or to do great deeds of kindness; our Father only asks us to do according *to our ability*. But depend on it, many little chances of playing the good Samaritan will come to you. You will very often be able to be merciful, for if you have no opportunity of showing mercy to men, I am

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sure, many a time you will be able to do so to animals; and remember, that each such little act of gentleness and tenderness will be remembered by the great Father, who notices even when a sparrow falls to the ground.

Don't think it will be necessary for you to go seeking hither and thither opportunities for showing deeds of kindness, for being a good Samaritan. Keep quiet in your homes, and believe me, there will be often children in distress, of whom you hear, or whom you see, and to whom you may, by God's help, be both friend and guide.

Nor think, that because it is to children or to dumb animals that your mercy and pity are shown, that the blessed Jesus will forget it. "Forasmuch as ye did it," He will say one day, "to the least of these, My brethren—ay, even to this houseless, homeless, dirty, ragged little Arab of the street; to that poor fatherless wee mite, lying sick and dying in the hospital—forasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it unto *Me*."

When the sweet Lord was hot and tired on His long journeys, would you not gladly have run and fetched Him water to drink, or found Him some cool shady spot where He could rest a while? Then *you may do so now*. You have His word for it. Doing it for the tiniest of His brothers and sisters is doing it for Him, just because He is brother to us all; just because He lived and died for us; just

because He is waiting in our Father's home for us all. It is because He is one with the Father, and we are all one with Him, members of one family, heirs of one kingdom of which He is head, that doing kindness and acts of love to one another is doing them to Him. You see, they are done *for the love of Him*; that is the whole truth of the matter.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," says our English proverb; and the title of this parable, "The Good Samaritan," has come to be a proverb, too, in the mouth of all men, even when they forget who gave them the proverb, who taught them the lesson.

This story, closing as it does, the Second Part of "The King's Story Book," leaves us with a thought which is a treasure in itself.

The parable of the Good Samaritan was told as Jesus and His disciples were "in the way, going up to Jerusalem."

They would come through the rocky pass, where the poor man had been attacked, and would have a long, steep, tiring walk till they reached the peaceful house in Bethany.

Does no one, in that small band of weary travellers, remind you of the Good Samaritan?

Were there no sad, sorrowing, sin-stained hearts *in the great city* on the other side of the moun-

tain, beyond Olivet,—yes, in Jerusalem,—who were waiting wearily for some good Samaritan to come to them? Were there no travellers there from earth to heaven, who had been stripped of all that they had?

To all such, verily, the Good Samaritan is even now on His way. He will stay some days at Bethany, and walk in and out of the city, with words of scorn for the oppressors, and whispers of peace and blessedness for the afflicted and the repentant.

There will be a sadness, almost sternness, about some of the stories He tells in the city next week, for men are about to reject Him. He is coming to His own, but His own will not receive Him. The priests will say, "He has a devil, and is mad." The Roman governor will give way before the clamour of the priest-led crowd. A fickle multitude will welcome Him one day as the Son of David, and the next, will shout "Crucify Him!"

But through all this weary, heart-breaking time, Jesus, above all men, *the* Good Samaritan, will go calmly on His way, binding up broken hearts, and preaching deliverance to the captive. To His own He will prove a friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and He and they will part joyfully because of His promise that, though unseen, He will be with them still, and because of their patient expectation of the fulfilment of His words—

“I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Where He is! Not in the bloodstained city of Jerusalem, not amid the weird shadows of Gethsemane, not in the judgment-hall of Pilate, not on the brutal cross; but in the glory which He had with His Father before all worlds,—in the kingdom of heaven, the life everlasting.

THE END.

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